





# The Golden Mountain

(C)

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The Historical Background

Chapter I - History of the Chinese  
in California

Preatory Remarks (500)

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Chapter II The White Settlers

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Part III

# I

## Introductory

Of few civilizations are so many erroneous notions currently accepted as of the Chinese. Even respectable scholars, a generation ago, regarded it as being one of the oldest civilizations in the world and as having become static centuries ago, certainly since the Manchu dynasty. We know now that all these assumptions are wrong, that China had contacts with the Neolithic cultures of the near East possibly as long as 15,000 years ago and that some connection with the ancient world of Western Asia and the Mediterranean, even if interrupted for long periods of time, persisted down to the breakdown of the Roman Empire. For the period after that no one, of course, has ever seriously denied it. We also know now that no civilization comparable to those of Egypt and the near East developed in China until ~~1000~~<sup>approximate 1500</sup> B.C., at least ~~four~~<sup>three</sup> thousand years later than that of Egypt and the near East. ~~For~~ As to the ~~also~~ ~~second~~ ~~of the generally accepted assumptions,~~ ~~ally we now realize that historians chose to call~~ ~~socalled~~ the crystallization and ossification of Chinese culture after the coming of the Manchus in 1644 applied, ~~that most scholars now realize applies,~~ ~~at best, only to the culture of the ruling class.~~ For the lower classes, particularly for the peasants



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*eighty five percent*  
who constituted ~~75%~~ <sup>has</sup> of the population, nothing changed either for the better or the worse. It could not have become worse.

If frequent changes, some gradual, some rapid, and some catastrophic, characterized the fortunes of the civilization of the ruling classes of China from 1000 B.C. to the present day, we can be certain that the same held true for the peasants even if, among them, these changes were often brought about by other causes such as overpopulation, floods, droughts and disease. For them the Manchu conquest meant essentially merely one more thing, one more series of customs and beliefs ~~that they were forced~~ to add to their already overburdened and conglomerate store of folk-ways and folklore. Let us pause for a moment to ~~describe~~ <sup>see</sup> briefly what that was.

Superimposed upon the older substratum of customs and beliefs which had developed from time immemorial, there first appeared Taoism, about 600 B.C., a mystical philosophy that may have taken on ~~as it indeed~~, <sup>Aspect</sup> ~~did~~, a more spiritual form among a favored few but ~~which~~ <sup>that</sup> degenerated into a most corrupt form of belief by the time it reached the people proper. Taoist priests soon became identified with magic and the grossest forms of superstition. <sup>nor was the condition improved</sup> and this was not helped when Chinese



Chinese life and thought was overwhelmed, <sup>(beginning with approximately 100 A.D.)</sup> from 200 A.D. onwards by Buddhism. For here too the higher aspects of that religion were soon lost and a new folk religion emerged which ~~was~~ <sup>might be called the representing</sup> an inconsistent merging of some of the higher and grosser forms of Indian Buddhism of the first century A.D., with the older ancestor worship <sup>which had passed from time immemorial</sup> of the Chinese people proper. The pantheon that thus ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> represents a strange medley of ancient ~~con-~~ <sup>indigenous</sup> conceptions and beliefs, ~~and of~~ <sup>and</sup> over attitudes ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> foreign conceptions and beliefs and the new and hybrid <sup>religion</sup> conceptions and beliefs that ~~such as were~~ most naturally developed in such an atmosphere. One new thing that Buddhism <sup>introduced</sup> ~~which~~ was to <sup>become</sup> of far-reaching importance for the history of Chinese thought and religion, the belief in reincarnation and in the transmigration of the soul. When this was superimposed on the older belief in ghosts and witches and on ancestor worship, <sup>this led to the development of</sup> a religious environment was produced of a somewhat unique kind. <sup>And then</sup> From Tibet, or at least, through Tibetan intermediaries, there came, at a time not easily determined, a conception of hell and the torments suffered there by the souls of the damned that bears an astonishing resemblance, in many ways, to Dante's description. This too was put through the sieve of popular Buddhism.

In such an environment ~~that~~ the average Chinese has been living for the last thousand years,



partly because there were no reasons, economic, political and social, <sup>sufficiently powerful to force</sup> that would have induced him to

~~which has controlled the destiny of China throughout that long period~~  
change it, partly because it was in the interests of the feudalistic governing class ~~not to have him change~~

it. Both these facts must be remembered, because only then will we be in a position to understand why, on the <sup>of this nature</sup> one hand, such beliefs persist so long and why, on the <sup>at times</sup> other, they deteriorate so rapidly or are <sup>the</sup> actually discarded. Only after we have allowed for political and economic utilization of such beliefs is it pertinent to inquire into the question of whether they may not possess an autonomy of their own ~~which is rooted in that~~ mental-emotional scrapbag to which the term human nature is so conveniently and consistently applied.



## Village and Town Life in China

To understand the religious beliefs and folklore of a people it is necessary to ~~understand some~~ <sup>have some understanding</sup> ~~time~~ of the social and economic system in which they live. For that reason A brief summary will <sup>have</sup> ~~here be~~ <sup>to supply</sup> attempted.

Until the establishment of the Republic in 1911 China, as we know, was an absolute monarchy. Theoretically it was a centralized government <sup>organized on a most organic</sup> of a marked hierarchical ~~order~~ <sup>pattern</sup>. The Emperor was the supreme ruler <sup>supposed</sup> to be answerable only to heaven. His will was law and all state officials were ultimately responsible to him. Under the Central Government there were provincial governments with a governor or viceroy with complete authority over finance, the army and the administration of justice. The provinces, in their turn, were divided into circuits administered by an official called tootai and the circuits were further subdivided into prefectures of various degrees and importance. They too had an official at their head. <sup>Below</sup> ~~Under~~ the prefectures came subprefectures <sup>each on</sup> governed by an official designated as Chi-yuen. It was this official who was in direct contact with the people. He <sup>had</sup> ~~had~~ a variety of functions to perform extending from



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*Conditions of the*

that of reporting on the weather and the market prices, to that of gathering the taxes and trying civil and criminal cases. The sub-prefecture, in turn, was divided into districts called sze and these again into wards called pao or tu. These pao or tu coincided <sup>roughly</sup> with a town or village. A large town or city, of course, was made up of a number of such wards. At the head of ~~such a~~ <sup>A</sup> pao stands an elder, always a member of the local <sup>or governing class</sup> gentry. Theoretically he was selected by the whole group. Actually he was selected by a small coterie of landlords from among ~~their own number~~ <sup>as we now</sup> themselves. This elder had under him an official who was to all intents and purposes a bailiff.

Now, nominally, the village was governed by the central government through this hierarchical series of officials. Actually the village was an autonomous unit and has been <sup>in most cases</sup> for probably two thousand years. It was in complete control of everything connected with the police, education, public health, public repairs of roads and canals, lighting and all the other innumerable matters of village concern. All these matters were taken care of by voluntary associations of the villagers themselves. It goes without saying that, in the performance of these functions, a village could not always stand alone, quite apart from the fact that



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traditional bonds bound one village with the other. This had led, ~~from~~ <sup>from</sup> from remote times, to the formal drawing-up of As a result, ~~many~~ <sup>from</sup> inter-village treaties, ~~existed~~, <sup>exists</sup>. Some <sup>of these were</sup> purely commercial, ~~more~~ <sup>more</sup> in the nature of <sup>many</sup> defensive alliances, for the relations between vil- lages as well as ~~those between towns~~, <sup>many</sup> were not always amicable. Indeed wars between ~~a~~ <sup>and from</sup> group of villages ~~were~~ were not infrequent.

~~Such, in brief, was the~~  
~~so much for the~~ general political set-up. But a Chinese village was much more than ~~that~~. <sup>(a mere political unit. It is fundamental)</sup> The central characteristic ~~unit~~ <sup>(many)</sup> has still to be mentioned, <sup>we know,</sup> the family. The Chinese family ~~is~~ <sup>and forms a</sup> based on the patriarchal principle, that is, on the theory that the father is the head of the family ~~with~~ <sup>and</sup> fairly unlimited power over his wife and children, ~~and that~~ <sup>and especially</sup> each family constituted an independent social unit. The position of the father in this hierarchy does not necessarily imply that the mother had no specific status or functions. She had both, for she was the center <sup>of</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>this domestic life</sup> the domestic life and in the China of pre-republican days and even today was of a nature <sup>(which exists in)</sup> far more complicated type than that ~~in~~ <sup>for instance</sup> Western Europe. To the mother fell the duties of finding a bride or bridegroom for her children and the management of all the multifarious matters concerning their betrothals. <sup>and</sup> To her also fell the often onerous task of directing ~~all~~ the social and extremely punctilious relations



*obtaining between* too  
~~with~~ friends and relatives. It was she, ~~likewise~~, who  
attended to the proper performance of ~~all the~~ <sup>(the various)</sup> cere-  
monies concerning marriage, birth and death, <sup>(who attended to)</sup> the ob-  
servance of the proper degree of respect due from one  
member of the family to another and <sup>to</sup> the regular keeping  
of the festivals. All this had to be duly observed ac-  
cording to rules laid down in the official book of fam-  
ily laws.

*Gl*  
A family did not consist simply of a man, his  
wife and <sup>his</sup> children. It ~~generally~~ included, more parti-  
cularly among the wealthier families, four or even five  
generations <sup>of relatives</sup> and that meant, if we include collaterals, <sup>relations</sup>  
from ten to fifteen groups. <sup>(of people)</sup> The ordinary family re-  
garded, with something akin to horror, the dying out of  
his direct line and to prevent it had recourse either  
to concubinage, among those who could afford it, or to  
adoption. According to one of our best authorities,  
"The fear of a line's discontinuance is doubtless in-  
volved in the cult of ancestor-worship. Hence the  
ghost must needs be served with offerings by the de-  
scendants; or, in the words of the Chinese, 'the hun-  
soul must be appeased.' There is, moreover, the eco-  
nomic factor to be reckoned with, for the son, or  
sometimes even the daughter, provides support for the



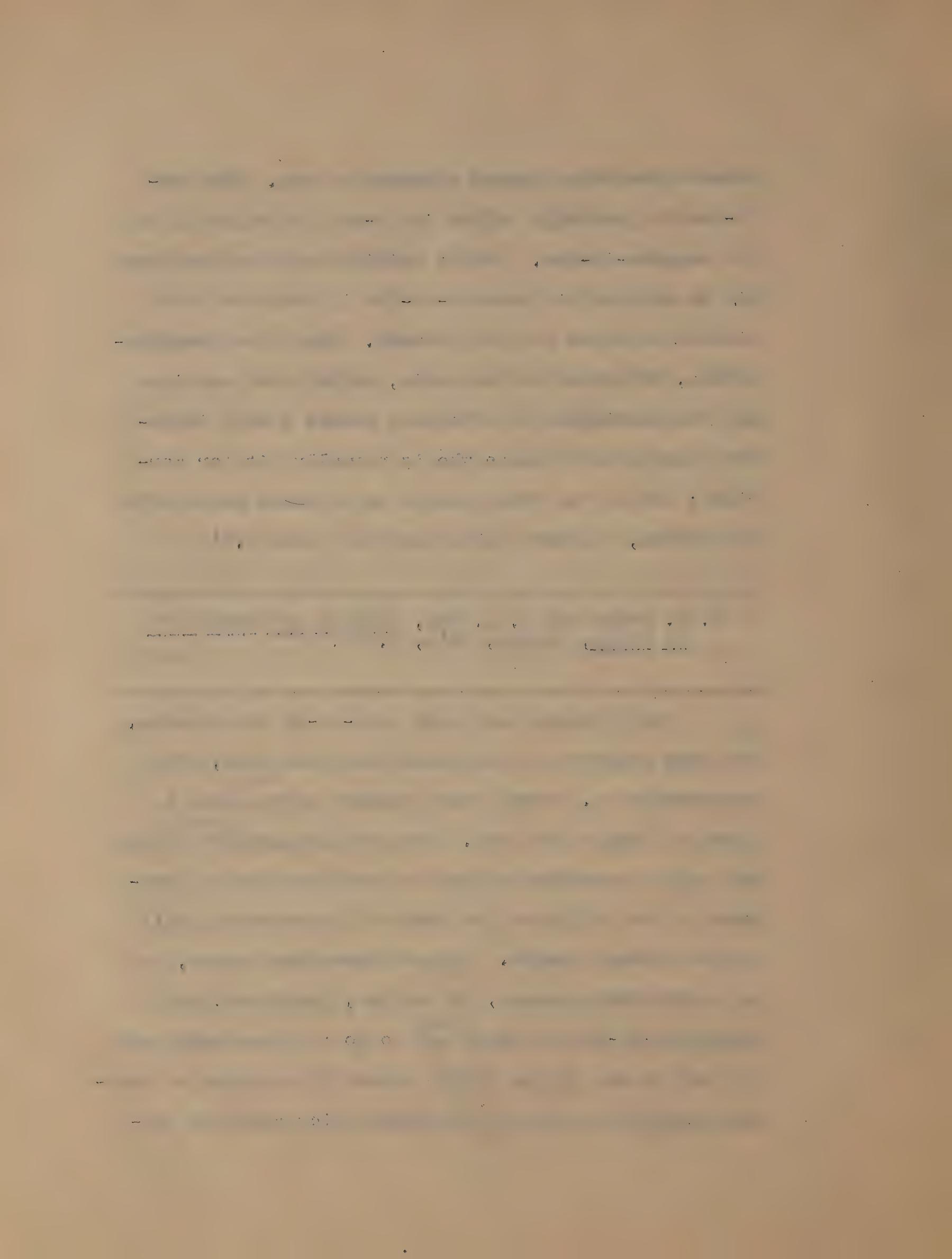
parents when they become advanced in age. The son-in-law is generally called 'half-son' in relation to the parents-in-law. Public opinion (not law) obliges him to support his parents-in-law if they are left without children and are in want. These two considerations, religious and economic, explain why marriage and the upbringing of offspring become a duty incumbent upon every Chinese who is normally fit for marriage; and as the young people do not make betrothals themselves, the duty falls upon the parents."<sup>1</sup>

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Y. K. Leong and L. K. Tao, Village and Town Life in China, London, 1915, p. 10.

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Few villages have many well-to-do inhabitants. The vast majority of the inhabitants are poor, often desperately so. Such a poor peasant may <sup>indeed</sup> possess a piece of land of his own. Far more frequently, he does not and is compelled either to rent land from a land-owner or to cultivate the land of the ancestral hall or the village temple. In such cases, that means, in an overwhelming number, the mother, daughters, and ~~daughters~~ daughters-in-law, not only had to do the household work but had to add to the family income by recourse to whatever employment they might obtain which could be car-



ried on at home. The family earnings were all given to the mother to take care of.

The oft-asserted statement that the family system of the Chinese was in part socialistic is due to two of its characteristics, first that every member of this joint-family had theoretically a claim on the earnings of the others and had theoretically to work not for himself but for his family and, secondly, to its collective responsibility for the crimes of any one of its members. This in cases of treason, during the old regime, often meant that capital punishment might be meted out upon a whole family irrespective of the sex or age of the members. One of the theories developed to explain this collective responsibility was that crimes were regarded as largely the result of ~~for sprung from the~~ heredity and ~~domestic environment~~. The actual explanation is, of course, quite simple and has nothing to do either with any type of incipient socialism or far-fetched theory of the inheritance of criminal propensities. It is simply one of the well-known characteristics of a clan organization, for the Chinese family is actually a division of a clan. That, likewise, is the explanation for the great importance attached to securing the socalled san-tai of an individual before a betrothal. The san-tai is a genealogical record ex-



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tending backward for three generations and was really required in order to guard against marriage between degrees forbidden by the clan.

We mentioned before the ancestral hall and the village temple. No account of a village is complete without some description of them. The ancestral hall is essentially a memorial temple where the ancestral spirits of the clan are honored and their birth and death anniversaries commemorated. Since a <sup>Chinese</sup> clan may often have thousands of members and since the families of the same clan do not necessarily inhabit the same village, a number of different kinds of temple exist. Either there is a communal temple for all one's ancestors, or a common temple where only very remote ancestors are worshipped or <sup>finally</sup> a temple belonging <sup>specifically</sup> ~~only~~ to ancestors of a particular branch of the clan. The expenses of ancestral worship and the repair of graveyards are defrayed from the property possessed jointly by the clan.

Elaborate rituals and ceremonies are performed in these ancestral halls in connection with the various festivals of the year. On ~~these~~ <sup>such</sup> occasions all the clan members attend, making their obeissances before the ancestral tablets and pay their due respects to their ancestors. Each temple has several divisions, one is the center for the memorial tablet of the remotest an-



cestor of the clan and his wife and one, to each side of this one, for the sons of the remotest ancestor and his wife.

In short, the ancestral hall is <sup>(or war,</sup> ~~the center par~~ <sup>s</sup> ~~excellence~~ of village life in all its <sup>most</sup> vital social implications and election to its governing board <sup>(war</sup> ~~one~~ of the most coveted ambitions of a member of the village. Incidentally, It may be added, that while no salaries were paid this governing board, enough money could be obtained by <sup>the</sup> indirect and dishonest manipulations of the accounts of the clan to make competition for membership <sup>to</sup> ~~on~~ lively and, at times <sup>indeed,</sup> ~~exceedingly~~ acrimonious.

Of almost equal significance as a center of village life was the village temple. This corresponded, strangely enough, not so much to the village church among us as to the village town hall. Such a village temple was dedicated to a large variety of deities, many of them differing from village to village according to the traditions and predilections of the villagers. As <sup>stated</sup> suggested above, <sup>the village temple</sup> it really serves more as a center of social than of religious life. In many ways it can be defined as a sort of clearing-house for the superstitions, and considerable revenues accrue to the temple and its officials from the offerings of the nu-



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The account that follows refers to a little village in southern China at some distance from the city of Canton. It was obtained from a native ~~now living~~ in San Francisco.

numerous individuals who come to ask the most diverse types of favors from the gods to whom the temple is dedicated.

Perhaps a concrete example of the life of a village will bring out some of the facts mentioned above more clearly and vividly. I am selecting a little village in southern China, at some distance from the city of Canton, as given

In this village All the members belong to the same family. It contained <sup>There are</sup> seven compounds with seven to eight houses in each compound. Just in front of the village there <sup>is</sup> a large pool in which a few fish were raised. At each end <sup>stood stands</sup> ~~there was~~ a two-story building constructed on the pattern of a small fortress.

Both <sup>had</sup> a few small windows for shooting in case of an attack by bandits. In the very rear of the village there <sup>are</sup> two more substantial "fortresses" <sup>lies</sup> five stories high. Behind the village proper <sup>is</sup> a forest three times the area of the village itself. The forest served two purposes. In times of peace the villagers <sup>can</sup> use the fallen leaves and the broken branches for fuel, and in times of danger, such as <sup>during</sup> an attack by bandits, they <sup>can</sup> hide themselves <sup>therein</sup> ~~in it~~. Like all typical villages <sup>of this type</sup> ~~there are~~ two wells, one at each end. These served as the main water sup-



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ply. At the extreme left end ~~stood~~ the ancestral hall, and at the extreme right the temple, <sup>stands</sup> ~~in the latter~~ in which resided the god who protected the village land and its inhabitants. During the New Year celebration sacrifices <sup>are</sup> ~~were~~ made to the ancestors of the family in the ancestral hall. On ordinary days it <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ used as a schoolhouse.

Every year, at New Year, the male elders, that is, individuals over fifty years old, meet in the ancestral hall to discuss the problems of the village and <sup>to</sup> pay homage to their ancestors. Whole pigs ~~were~~ sacrificed and, after being properly cut up into small pieces, ~~are~~ distributed among the village families according to the number of men in each family. These festivities, lasting seven days, are eagerly welcomed by the poor families because it is often the only time during the year when they eat meat.

The ancestral hall possesses its own property in the form of land. ~~and~~ This is rented out for cultivation to those members of the village who make the highest bid. The properties of the hall are controlled entirely by the village elders and although, theoretically speaking, every man over fifty is allowed to participate in the meetings, actually the wealthier families dominate the affairs of the village complete-



it need hardly be said,  
ly and not always for the good of the community.

There existed ~~is~~ a sort of a society established about seventy-five years ago to celebrate the Autumn Festival. No new members have been admitted since its establishment, membership being inherited in the male line by the descendants of the founders who, at that time, paid thirty chien (a sixteenth of an American cent) for initiation. Only one family in the whole community does not belong to it because their ancestor did not, at the time, have the price of admission. Apparently an economic motive lay behind the foundation of this society for one of its main purposes is to auction off to the highest bidder, the year's accumulation of dung. The funds thus obtained <sup>are</sup> used to celebrate the Autumn Festival.

As in most villages, ninety percent of the inhabitants <sup>are</sup> peasants. There ~~were~~ were a few ~~who~~ owned more than thirty mu of land and a few ~~who~~ owned nothing. The majority ~~fall~~ between <sup>the two extremes</sup> so that it ~~may~~ be said that the villagers belong ~~to~~ to the group of small peasant landowners. The main crops ~~were~~ are rice, sweet potatoes and sugarcane. Two crops ~~were~~ are raised each year, one around September, and one around May. For ploughing the water-buffalo <sup>is</sup> used. The richer farmers ~~had~~ their own water-buffalo <sup>as</sup> but the majority either had ~~to~~ to hire one from somebody else <sup>or</sup> except <sup>very</sup> where two or three families bought one in common.



A small portion of the inhabitants ~~were~~ <sup>are</sup> merchants, transacting their business at the market place ~~which~~ <sup>is</sup> was about two miles from the village. These ~~were~~ <sup>are</sup> the real capitalists, for whenever the peasants ~~were~~ <sup>are</sup> in need of cash, and that <sup>is</sup> was almost always just before planting time, they ~~would~~ go to these merchants to borrow money so that they <sup>can</sup> ~~could~~ purchase the necessary seed, <sup>This</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>for</sup> loan ~~to~~ be repaid after the crop <sup>is</sup> was gathered. These debts <sup>are</sup> ~~were~~ repaid either in cash or in kind. The interest <sup>is</sup> was enormous, running from fifty to sixty percent a year. <sup>Naturally</sup> ~~This has naturally~~ <sup>all</sup> by this led to tremendous exploitation with its attendant ill-will and animosities. There ~~were~~ <sup>are</sup> a few middle class peasants <sup>in the village</sup> ~~who managed~~ to save a little extra money <sup>which</sup> and this they ~~would~~ lend to their close relatives. In such cases it <sup>is</sup> would be difficult to estimate the rate of interest for, first of all, the debtors <sup>and</sup> ~~were~~ relatives and, secondly the debt <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ always repaid in kind. <sup>To make what has just been said more concrete</sup> Let us follow the history of an individual in such a village. We shall call him Lum. Lum belonged to the very poor stratum of the <sup>est</sup> ~~population~~ <sup>village</sup>. He worked on a small piece of land for a few bushels of rice a year. Yet he managed to save enough to establish himself as a peddler. In his



capacity as a peddler he moved about the country a little and discovered that new lands were opening up along the river not far from his native village, <sup>He saw</sup> and that labor was needed to till these new lands, <sup>so</sup> ~~the employer~~ he hired himself out as a farm laborer. While ~~work-~~  
~~ing there~~ he learned how to manufacture silk and saved enough money so that he could become a partner in a silk factory in the town near which he worked.

Because of his poverty he had not been able to marry at the usual age, <sup>i.e.</sup> eighteen to twenty, but much later, so he adopted a young man of twenty, to help him. Later <sup>indeed</sup> he had four sons and a daughter of his own. Father and adopted son worked hard for ten years. Business continued good and thus, after an absence of many years, he was able to return to his native village and start manufacturing silk there.

<sup>Lum</sup> ~~He~~ had his weaknesses. One of them was a passion for gambling. On the other hand he was good at figures and kept his own accounts fairly well. Unfortunately he was illiterate and this put him at the mercy of all those who could read and write. Since he was engaged in an industry, and since all petitions to a magistrate had to be in writing, he was at a serious disadvantage. And so, with some misgivings, he decided to send one of his children to school so that

and a number of other companies.

1. The following:

2. The following:

3. The following:

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5. The following:

6. The following:

7. The following:

8. The following:

he could learn to read and write and keep his books for him. The son he chose, first served as an apprentice in a store in a neighboring district. He was then twelve. Then he worked as a cook and general houseboy for three years. Finally, at the mature age of fifteen, he was sent to another ~~store~~ <sup>shop</sup> to actually learn a trade and ~~to~~ become a business man. To be certain that the master to whom his son was apprenticed would fulfill his contract and really teach his son his trade, he paid him ten taels <sup>(the exorbitant sum of)</sup> for the training. At the end of three years the son was ready. He was then eighteen and his father sent him to Indo-China. He returned after a year, having made no success. He then married and remained at home for one year to help his father, working as a silk salesman. But the wanderlust that assails so many Cantonese was upon him and at twenty-one he came to California. And so Lum had educated his son only to see him drift away from him completely.

One more detail about the typical village must be born in mind and that is the somewhat amazing percentage of land, often exceedingly fertile land, that is given over to the dead. In general it can be said that two to four percent of the farm land of a given



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district is in graves. At times it rises <sup>to</sup> as high as nine percent. What this must mean economically to a country so overpopulated as China, can well be imagined. Nor is it difficult to visualize the influence this close proximity, physical and economic, of the dead to the living, must have had upon strengthening and continually reinvigorating that belief in ghosts which is so fundamental a trait of Chinese peasant life...

Before turning to a consideration of the folklore and folk beliefs themselves <sup>let me</sup> we shall try <sup>and</sup> to reinforce the description of the village given above by appealing to the memories of their native life that still persist among Chinese permanently residing <sup>outside of it, particularly in</sup> California. This is all the more necessary for an understanding of this folklore because, after all, it was collected <sup>(in California)</sup> here, in an environment and an atmosphere foreign and alien to the cultural soil on which it arose and matured. It is always best, under such circumstances, to attempt to gauge the nature of the tricks memory is apt to play.



The nature of the life, particularly the hardships under which the average Chinese live, will perhaps be best understood if I summarize the life of three typical individuals, all natives of Kwantung Province. Let us call them, respectively, Chen, Kwan, and Mrs. Tang. Chen's account is particularly interesting because he succeeded eventually in obtaining an excellent education and was conscious of the political situation of his country and the larger economic issues ~~that were~~ involved.

The family of Chen had engaged in farming for many generations. His family was poor, belonging to the group of peasants which used to have no land of its own. Every year, during the first few days of the Chinese New Year, his family, as well as other peasants who had no land and did not wish to rent any from the landlords, had to bicycle to the village hall to secure a field from the so-called "village commune."

These communes in Kwantung Province usually owned a certain amount of land around the village. How the lands were acquired and by what means, nobody knows. These lands were supposed to be the property of the whole



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village. But although they were supposedly common property, which means that every member of the village had a share in them, they were, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, actually controlled by a few propertied country gentlemen. Every year, the older people, i.e., those above fifty, gathered together in the village hall and elected officers to take care of the village property, the most important of which was always, of course, land. In theory, everyone who qualified for a seat in the meeting had a voice in all village matters, but in fact, the poorer and the politically weaker portion of the village was always dominated by the rich and politically strong group.

As a result, the political offices always fell to the wealthy class. The officials elected were not government officials, but they possessed specific rights in connection with the village. They might even determine the right of certain individuals to marry when they thought a marriage would be injurious to the prosperity of the village. They acted as judges in minor cases. All disputes came to them first. All those cases where they could not come to any decision were referred to the district authorities. In short, they were regarded by the government as official representatives of the village and were frequently summoned by



the civil authorities to report upon local conditions. For instance, during the Manchu Dynasty anyone who went to Peking to take the Imperial examinations was paid all his travelling expenses by the village, including those of his servants.

Even after the so-called revolution which was supposed to have done away with the special privileges of the governing class, a high school graduate received double share in the distribution of village profits and other privileges. Of course no sons of peasants would ever have been given the honor of taking the Imperial examinations at Peking or, for that matter, of dreaming of the right to go to high school, even though more than ninety per cent of the population of the country was illiterate.

It has always been known that in China the larger landlords and wealthier classes were famous for their corruption and public officials were, of course, always at their beck and call. It was not strange therefore that the propertied class of the village, the so-called Tuho class, should have aped the manners of their superiors and become even more corrupt.

The lands of the village were under the control and the management of the Tuho class, and were rented to the peasants of the same village. There was no



fixed rate of rent, for the land was divided into numerous "fields" and given to the highest bidder. A specific day was fixed during the New Year holidays for this bidding. All peasants who wanted a field to cultivate for the current year had to go to the village hall in person and bid for it. Rents were usually paid in advance. If the peasant had no cash in hand, he borrowed it from some rich man, and, of course, had to pay a high interest on it.

This briefly was the general economic set-up under which Chen was born. His grandparents had rented their land from the village commune. And it was due to this system of enslavement, so Chen contends, that he and his ancestors were exploited and oppressed for so many generations.

When European countries began exploiting China in the interests of their imperialistic progress it was the Province of Kwantung that first felt the <sup>m</sup>impact of their expansion. In the wake of the imperialist invasion, commercial capitalism developed very rapidly. Side by side with the old feudalistic commerce of the village, there thus emerged the small business class, resembling somewhat the burgesses of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Europe. About five miles from



Chen's village there grew up a little town which became the trading center of the district. Because of the continued floods and droughts which were due to the breakdown of the old irrigation system and the neglect and misrule of the authorities, the farming class became completely bankrupt. Chen's family was one of these. Thousands of these bankrupt peasants therefore streamed to the nearby towns and cities to seek their livelihood.

At the age of eleven Chen was sent to this little town near his village to learn to be a carpenter. He served as an apprentice for six years and received no salary at all for his services. During his apprenticeship he was cook, servant and worker in the shop all in one. He had to get up very early, about five o'clock in the morning, and begin the day by sweeping the floor; then he cooked breakfast and put everything in order. At eight o'clock, he went out to the market to buy food for the day, and at nine, he began to cook lunch. Dinner was served at five and it was he who had to prepare it. The shop closed at nine in the evening and it was he who had to close it. While other workers could go home when their shops were closed, he had to remain to clean up and put things in order. Not infrequently the master would ask him to do a little work for his family and he, as an apprentice, had no choice but to



comply. After serving as apprentice for six years, he became a regular worker, thus leaving his old position for somebody else. As a worker, he received three dollars a month. Yet he considered this a great opportunity and was proud of his profession, boasting about it to all of his relatives and friends.

Now throughout the period of the Manchu dynasty there existed secret associations. They were of different types, but most of them were anti-Manchu and were in favor of restoring the Ming to the throne. Although begun as anti-Manchu organizations, these secret associations gradually began to lose their old political significance and become organizations of the people for fighting against the corruption of the local magistrates and against the oppressions of local landlords. In the immediate neighborhood of Chen's village there was one such organization called San Ting Huiu which means The Three Spots Society. It was claimed that this association first made its appearance at the beginning of the Manchu dynasty. Among other things, this secret association preyed upon the members of the Tuho class and distributed the loot they collected among the poor people. One must not, however, be confused by its outward altruistic character, for though it claimed



to be a sort of Robin Hoodish group, actually it was controlled by shrewd leaders who made use of the association for their own profits. In spite, however, of its essentially dishonest nature, people flocked to it by the thousands because they were so dissatisfied with the oppression of the landlords and the corruption of the government magistrates that they were not interested in discriminating between what was right and what was wrong, even if they had known.

Chen joined the San Ting Huiu society when he was twenty-two years old. Every new member had to take an oath of fidelity. They had to swear to be loyal to the "Big Brothers;" they must pay respect to the image of the first emperor of the Ming dynasty; to help fellow brethren when they were in danger; to maintain absolute secrecy and not to expose any fellow brethren to the Manchu magistrates.

Chen joined the San Ting Huiu in the later days of the Manchu dynasty. With the coming of the Republic, the San Ting Huiu went out of existence. The economic bankruptcy of the country became more pronounced every day and the peasants, particularly the young ones, were forced to go to foreign lands. Chen was one of these...

The life story of Kwan is perhaps more typical than the previous ones, showing the bondage under which



so many Chinese farmers lived and how, under the stimulus of the new techniques, ideas that have come from the west, it has been possible for some of them to attain a considerable degree of affluence and to develop into comfortable bourgeois. His life-history will also serve to illustrate the nature of the ties that bound a Chinese peasant to the soil on which he was raised long after he had ceased to live there permanently.

Kwan was the oldest son of a poor farmer of the Chung San district, of Kwantung. When he was barely two years old his father was so poor that he had to sell himself into what amounted to slavery. At that time he owed about \$900 to several wealthy persons who had lent it to him to buy some lands for farming. Unfortunately this land was not very productive nor, when it did produce, was it profitable. The main reason for this was, of course, not so much any natural lack of fertility of the soil but because of the frequent droughts. Only irrigation could have helped and for that Kwan's father was too poor. His creditors gave him four years in which to meet the payments.

During the next three years, however, not a single drop of rain fell. Kwan's father was again notified of his indebtedness and that he would have to meet his obligations promptly at the end of the fourth



year. If he could not do so they would expect him to work out his indebtedness to those who had lent him the money. In other words, he would have to work without remuneration until he had paid in work-hours the equivalent of the amount of the money owed. Two generations ago wages were very low. Farm hands or laborers were paid only nine to twelve dollars a year and so this meant, in effect, that to work out his loan he would have to work all his life without receiving any compensation, and not only he but his whole family would be in bondage for the rest of their lives.

Fortunately fate was kind to them and before the end of the fourth year rain fell in great abundance. Kwan's father was thus saved from virtual bondage for life. At that time Kwan was five years old. His father, freed from his obligations and worries could now devote himself with renewed energy and hopefulness to cultivating his land. In four years he had accumulated a little money and his family did not have to do without the necessities of life as had been the case for so many years before.

Kwan was sent to a missionary school near the county seat of his village. This school was supported by the missionaries from churches in the United States. There he was taught Chinese and various related subjects



as well as English and a trade. Much to his delight he was allowed to select whatever trade struck his fancy. He selected weaving and wicker furniture making. This happened to be very popular at the time. Kwan spent nine years in this school and after he graduated he entered a Chinese secondary school where he took some technical courses for two years.

His father felt that his training was now over and that he should help him with his farming. He was given charge of the business end of the farming. Full of the new ideas he had acquired during his schooling, he suggested to his father that the farm be irrigated and that more fertilizers be used so that there would be a greater yield of produce. The father acquiesced and the farm was completely turned over to the son. Kwan then hired three men to help him with the work of irrigation and fertilizing the soil. Soon they raised wheat, rye, rice, mustard green and other cereals and greens, all planted in rotation. After he had materially increased the income on the twenty-five acres of land, his next move was to turn it back to his father, for he had suddenly been overwhelmed with the desire to come to America, that land about which he had heard so much in school, and from Chinese-Americans who returned to visit their native land.



To America he went at the age of nineteen and he worked there for six years as laundry worker and cook before he returned to visit his parents. His return was celebrated in the approved Chinese manner.

His parents' first suggestion after his return was that he marry and raise a family. As a matter of fact, without his knowledge, they had already arranged for his betrothal to a young girl. He did not agree with this practice but he acknowledged the inalienable right of his parents to get him a wife. He, accordingly, went through with his part and was duly married with all the elaborateness that accompanied marriage in China a thousand years ago.

It may be of interest to quote Kwan's own description of these festivities:

"All my relatives were gathered into one house to help celebrate the happy occasion. When the bridal matron, as she was called, arrived at the bridegroom's house with the bride, the wedding guests rushed to the entrance to welcome her. The matron then helped everyone to open a red umbrella for the bride as soon as she stepped out of the sedan chair. The bride was carried on the back of the matron, while she held the umbrella over her. The umbrella was supposed to shield the bride from the unwelcome looks of the evil spirits and the bride was carried on the back of the matron in the belief that she would thus not step on anything that



evil spirits might have placed on the ground. In other words the bride must not let the evil spirits cast any spells upon her. Such practices, of course, are not much followed now. The so-called bridal matron was an elderly woman who had many children and grandchildren. She was hired by the bride's family. Only a woman with such qualifications was hired because of the belief that through her influence the bride would have many children. In other words, she symbolized productivity.

ness."

Kwan remained in China until a pair of identical twin boys was born to him. This was indeed a good omen for the future. Traditionally, a boy as the first-born child was welcomed with open arms, but two boys at the same time, that brought more joy to the heart of a Chinese father than gold. And so the happy event was celebrated for three long weeks.

Once more Kwan has returned to California. He has amassed a considerable fortune. He has always maintained close contact with China. His wife and the two children took frequent trips back to China and the children went to school in China for eight years.

But let us now turn from this typical success story to the fate that befell our third person, Mrs. Tang.



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Mrs. Tang was born in a village in the Chung Shan district of Kwantung Province, a moderately sized place with about two hundred families. She came from a peasant family, her grandfather "owning" more than a hundred mu of land just outside the village. On this land the entire family worked day and night, throughout the harvest season to help out their father and grandfather. With them worked a group of hired people. The family could not then have been badly off as Chinese peasants go. All the lands which her grandfather "owned" were rented from the richest landlord in the Chung Shan district. When she was a small child her grandfather died and the support of the entire family fell upon her father. He was a weak and sickly man and was unable to till so large an area so that, in consequence, more than half the lands had to be returned to the landlord and the resources of the family began to grow progressively worse. She never attended school or had other special training because parents did not allow the girls to be educated in the village. Once when she asked to go to school, a somewhat unusual request on a girl's part, her parents bluntly refused.

At the age of ten she started to work in the kitchen with her mother. A few years later, she helped her mother by cooking the meals during the busy period



of sowing and harvesting. She never was given any opportunity, she complained, of playing with any of the children in the neighborhood. She had never been in the city and was not even allowed to visit relatives who lived just outside the village. She, like so many other girls at that time, was becoming dimly aware of the injustice of the tyrannous control exercised by parents over children, especially the girls. There was nevertheless no outward rebellion.

When she was sixteen years old, she married a man who had once worked on her father's farm and who lived just a few miles from their home. The marriage, of course, had been arranged. Her parents told her that the marriage had cost about five hundred or six hundred dollars (silver). From this one can obtain some idea of the drain on the family resources the marriage festivities must have meant if a family, living in such penury, would nevertheless spend so huge a sum on such an occasion. It often took years to pay off the indebtedness then contracted. To make matters worse the first child born to them was a daughter.

At the time, Mrs. Tang's husband was working in Canton city. For fourteen hours a day he received the munificent sum of fifteen dollars monthly. In order



to help out she did weaving at home. Her husband owned no property, the house in which they lived being rented from a neighbor for sixty cents a month.

In 1920, her husband had an opportunity to come to the United States and prospered there sufficiently to send home \$400 to \$500 every year for a number of years and she and her immediate family thus lived in comfortable circumstances for a short period at least. Since she could not read and write she had to engage a person to read and write for her whenever letters were received or dispatched.

Finally her husband sent for her and she left, leaving her daughter in the care of her mother. Life was good to her in California. Her husband was first a farmer in this city and then he bought a small grocery store in San Francisco. The next year the coveted son was born to her and the following year, another, so that everything seemed to augur happiness. But all her hopes collapsed when her husband was killed in a Tong feud. She had to sell her store and is now eking out a miserable existence working in a cannery, in a shrimp shop and at sewing...

Such was the life and such are the people among whom the folklore we are about to describe, developed. But before we turn to it - a few words about <sup>its</sup> the nature of may not be out of place.



### The Open Window

Has it been long tedious months that have gone by thus? But it is more like centuries of immobility of time. The blue of the changing sky is slowing giving way to night, and tonight, sitting here, staring out the window toward the far away horizon, distant and apart, I feel humble and weak. Innumerable times have I stood by here, in this very same place, at this very hour, admiring the changing pattern of the celestial firmament, when the blue meets the black, and the black gives way to the coming of dark night. Many times I sit by this window, experiencing this very same feeling, a feeling of sadness, of pessimistic outlook on life, the feeling of being small, weak, puny, and unable to rise above myself.

The setting sun is like a halo dipping far down into the distant sea, and in a very brief minutes, it will be out of sight, lost and forgotten until morning again. The sky will then gradually grows dark, the turquoise blue deepening into a dull ominous blue, then blackness will steadily creeps over the sleeping world, and the city, this city, my city, will be lost in the shadow of sleep.

I have seen this happen many times, and every time from my window, I have felt strange, ~~apart~~ <sup>apart</sup> and away from this earth, forever lost.

Five long years I have stayed in this little attic, this small space which I call my home, my room, my only world. I am alone, here by myself, solitary and sometimes bitterly melancholy and sad with weeping.



I seem to be by myself, separated and disconnected with the pulsing life of human beings. And during these moments of dreaming, of fantastic dreaming it seems, I never seem to enter into the life of mortal being. Instead I sit by my window, a small window it is too, a place where I can see down into the city, and see the life and movement of the breathing world.

My room is very low, and sometimes I have to bend my neck in order that I shall not bump my head on the low roof. I have grown tall at a very rapid rate, and more and more I find that my room is unable to stand in comfortably.

But this room is my home, my only world, and I would not change it for something better, not even a room with more windows, and where I can stand in without bumping my head. Why is it that I have such a very fond devotion to this little attic? There is nothing outstanding about it; it is too small to accomodate me, and it has but only one small window, my only view of the outside world, and besides I have to climb a small ladder to reach my room.

In the chill winter when the cold winds of January shed a veil of coldness outside, I would feel warm and contented inside in my room. Sometimes the wind would blow up the curtains, then I would feel cold, but I would not close the window at all. It is from there that I see the outside world, and I do not wish to shut it from my sight.

But tonight is a warm summer night, when the hot wind and air mingle with a strength that surge through my weakened flesh. My room feels stuffy, and I have a strong desire to go outside to feel the cool breeze.



But instead I remain in my room, watching the slowly setting sun far away. I feel a queer and unexplained feeling that I have never felt before surging through my body. I see the tall skyscrapers reaching toward the unlimited sky, I see the autos rushing here and there below me. The voices of horns, of human talk, and the ever rushing tide of humanity ~~hold~~ hold an extreme fascination to me now. Why is it that I never feel like this before. Why did I not notice the tall buildings, the people, the rushing scene before. Why do they hold such a fascination to me now?

I am still sitting by the same window, in the same room, in the same house, but I am different now, and inside I am not the same.

Only one brief week explains my different attitude toward life and its problems.

I have just come back from my very first vacation, and I just arrive back home from the country this afternoon. I have visited my uncle's farm near the city of Walnut Grove. There on the farm I found that intangible something that gave me faith again, a faith which I long needed, but never knew.

We were driving along the beautiful country road, my father and I, the tall trees stretching before us everywhere. On both side the warm vibrating country earth stretched out far into the distant. On leaving the city, I noticed a very peculiar change in the air, and it was exhilarating to me. A new and complete freshness came rushing in, and I drew in deep breathfuls, and all of a sudden I felt a new and



increased enthusiasm in life around me. Here I was out in the open air, the tall green trees, the birds singing, the rushing of the water, the endless blue sky, the marvel of mother nature, and for this moment I was lost in the beauty and joy of the country.

My father drove on in silence. Our automobile was the only one on the dusty road, and we drove along the banks of the blue river.

How do you like the country? my father suddenly asked me.

It's fine, said I.

You will like your uncle's farm, he said.

I hope so, I said.

And we drove on in silence again.

The smell of fruits, ripe and golden, polluted the air with a perfume sweetness.

From the dark brown earth, rich and black, there loomed up flowers and green grass, making a wondrous pattern on the earth.

The golden brown hills were spotted here and there with clumps of bushes, vines, and the trees gazed down with majestic power, silent and forever beautiful. The hills rose and fell with rhythmic grace as we passed by quickly.

One moment we saw the tall hills, then <sup>they</sup> ~~it~~ dipped down into the ~~road~~, and the hills <sup>were</sup> gone.

The land rose and fell too. The designs it suggested remind me of a beautiful pattern of quilts bound together with the thread of mother nature.

And so we drove on, with scenes of wondrous to the east of us, and to the west of us.



The fresh country air in this summer day was fully strange and powerful, separated and apart from the filth and dirt of the polluted city air. There driving along the road, my father kept his eyes straight ahead, the long winding road stretching forever onward, deeper and penetrating ~~deep~~ <sup>further</sup> toward the hot country.

Far away we could see the blue shining water, like a glittering sapphire, bright and glistening.

And the road went by, and again and again, now and then, we passed scenes of pure unadulterated beauty, clear and bright, and once more nature painted the whole landscape with magic strokes of her brush which rivaled that of the master painters.

Are we near uncle's ranch? I asked my father.

Very soon, said he.

And he drove the car around a bend, and we saw the hills no more. Instead we saw only the golden earth, brown and ripe, filled with the sweet smell and odor of summer ripeness. The air was hot, and the trees closed in around us, but my father drove on and on.

On and on we went, passing the brown land, the clusters of trees ripe with fruit and leaves.

Then far away, buried deep in the interior of clumps of trees, I saw my uncle's ranch. It was just a brown wooden ranch, old with age and time.

We are near the ranch, my father said to me.

And he drove the car into a lane into a soft dirt road, the dusting flying outward with beauty, as the wheels sprayed it all over.



Then as the car approached, we saw many people coming out of the ranch, my aunt, uncle and his three children.

Near the ranch I saw many chickens running around with proud sturdy strides, and in a cage, there were two brown rabbits. My aunt was standing there in the yard, her right hand shading her eyes, staring straight toward us.

Her three children were yelling loudly, jumping up and down with delightful glee.

We drove up to the ranch.

My father greeted my uncle and aunt, and then my uncle said to me, How are you, Paul?

I am fine, I said.

My aunt looked at me.

My, but Paul is thin. This country air would do you a lot of good. You must drink lots of fresh milk and grow strong like Ernest here.

And she put her hand around Ernest' chubby neck.

Suddenly I felt ashamed, mingling with these people.

We entered inside, and I could not see anything after the long hours in the bright sunlight.

Must you go out tonight? uncle said to father.

Yes, father said. But Paul w~~ill~~ stay here.

Yes, my aunt said, the country is good for him.

And then my aunt looked at me, and I was ashamed.

When night came, I found rest and tranquillity in my uncle's ranch, and lying there in the dark, I felt peace, and I knew that I should have come into the country before. It was all so very still, the feeling of rest, of complete



freedom from the worry and toil of the noisy city. The rustling of the leaves, the occasional movement of someone in the ranch, and the ripeness and fullness of the country air, all these, and still more combined to make me feel as if I was in another world, away and apart, distant, far away. There was nothing to disturb the majestic silence of night.

When morning dawned golden and bright, I woke up early, eager to get out of doors. I wished to see more of the country, and my uncle decided to take me around.

Uncle drove his old Ford, and away we went, the two of us. Above the sun was shining brightly, and along both sides of the road, the green trees shone like emeralds. What a unspeakable joy it was to behold all these wonders of nature. We were driving slowly, leisurely, watching every blade of grass, every ripple of the lake.

How did you sleep last night? uncle said.

Just swell, said I.

Do you like the country? said he.

Yes, I said.

You should stay here longer, he said.

But school will open soon again, I said.

That's true, he said, I have forgotten about your school. Next summer you should come in again.

I certainly will, I said to uncle.

Now we reached a very narrow path, and on two sides of the road, I could see two deep holes below, far down.

Do not be afraid, uncle said to me.

I won't, said I, although inside of me I felt a deep fear. We went by safely.



And I was eased then.

The trees and flowers carpeted the whole land.

The hot afternoon rolled along, and the wind of the country scorched the white dirt and sand. But riding along at a quick and rapid rate, we could feel the cool comfortable breeze, but when we stopped, the breeze was gone, and I was hot again.

It is time to go back now, said uncle.

All right, I said, for I am hungry as a bear.

Then uncle laughed. We will have a nice dinner when we reached home, he said.

I smiled and said, I could stand a good dinner, especially now.

And uncle laughed again.

We speeded along the road again, quick and fast, and riding in the auto in this summer air, I felt as though I was part of the country, I was the ~~trees~~<sup>trees</sup>, the flowers, the rivers that flowed down to the sea, all alive, all vital, moving, breathing.

I felt a certain strange power, desiring to fly quickly away, anywhere, to lie in the wet dewy grass, to go bare footed along the dirt roads, and to plunge myself into the water cold blue #### of the river.

For the first time in my life, I seemed in a very long while, to belong as part of the earth, to know what it was to breathe, to live.

What are you thinking about? my uncle said.

I started out of my dreaming.

I was thinking how nice it would be if we could live



in the country, I said.

I see that you like the country, he said.

Yes, I said.

You must come in next summer again, my uncle said to me.

And he drove on again.

The trees were silhouetted against the evening sky when the car drove up the dirt road. The lights in the little wooden house shone out like a bright and clear beacon, flashing out into the darkness, suggesting that inside there in the humble surroundings, the coal oil stove, the wooden beds, these simple people, there ~~was~~ were security and happiness. The sky was streaked with glorious colors like the painting of an ancient master of canvas.

Did you have a nice trip? my aunt asked.

It was wonderful, I said, there were so many things I saw, and many things that I feel.

You are already looking better, my aunt said.

I feel fine, I said.

At dinner time I drank a great deal of fresh milk, and helped myself to second helpings of everything that I could lay my hands on.

Your appetite has improve greatly, Paul, my uncle said to me.

It's good to eat a great deal, my aunt put in.

This quiet country life had gripped me completely.

And that night I found that sleep came to me easily and very naturally.

The next morning I saw the gardener at work. He was



not exactly a gardener, but he worked on uncle's ranch too, and he took care of the flowers around the house.

Good morning, he said.

Good morning, I said.

Are you going to stay here long? he asked.

I am going back to the city next week, I said.

You are still going to school?

Yes, I said, I am going to graduate from school very soon.

What are you going to do after that? he asked.

I don't know yet, I said.

You must come in here to your uncle's ranch to work in the summer vacation next year, he said.

I'm afraid the work is too hard for me, I said.

He looked at me.

You are rather a small boy.

I felt myself grow red in the face.

You should live in the country more, he said.

I like to, said I.

How are you feeling? said he.

Much better since I came here, said I.

And we talked on for quite a time, and the gardener told me many things of his childhood, and of his early life.

And I was fascinated with it all, this talk, this quiet air, so remote and yet so near.

Listening to him, a hope of enthusiasm came suddenly over me, and inside I felt an electrifying feeling of the flesh and ~~blood~~ <sup>blood</sup>. Somehow he gave me a confidence in people and life.

It was hard to understand, the ~~meaning~~ being vague and



~~—~~ unclear. But inside of me, I felt that certain something that held me, that gripped me, and I understood at that moment, standing there, looking at the man, he smiling at me, that forever and forever I would never forget this moment. I had that feeling that I had ~~acquired~~ <sup>acquired</sup> a certain new power, the power of clarity, the power of looking into <sup>the</sup> unconscious, of being able to know that I am alive and vital, the understanding that always it was my own thoughts that controlled me in the past.

Standing here in the green fields, the wind rustling and murmuring in the tree tops, the house standing so serenely, the quiet country air, the new power within me, my eyes bright with the air and enthusiasm of life, I said over to myself again and again, Is this the secret of life, this understanding of a certain remote power that is so strange, so vital, and I looked into the sky, the river, and the clouds, and I was completely awed by the splendor of nature.

Then walking slowly near the river bank, my life coming once more before me, the river slowly moving up and down, the wind caressing the placid face of the emerald river, I again felt strange.

I have acquired a certain power, I said, and from now on I am different.

I sat down on the stone, looking far into the distant horizon, feeling fine and strong, forgetting the past, the jeers and laughter that had always come to me again and again. I said again, I am different, and I shall be different now. I no longer am the small weakling when I first came into the



country to my uncle's ranch.

I was completely different, a new meaning had come creeping into my mental and physical life. I lay down on the green grass, feeling that now I am part of nature, and the whispering of the trees and the rustling of the leaves and grass were something new to me. In them I saw myself moving and living, forever moving.

This serene and majestic silence far away from my uncle's house, the forever of the blue sky, the vastness of the open spaces, the vital sense of living, nature, the movement of trees and leaves, now and again, the new power within me to know, to feel, to see in the little delicate intricate things of life, this would forever remain indomitable inside of me.

I looked into the azure sky, and saw the white jewelled clouds floating serently by, silently, yet proudly. The green grass was all around me now; I felt the wet dew, the sweet breath of nature, the freshness and cleanliness of the earth. I stretched my arms outward, forwards, trying to grip something, but what, even I myself, did not know.

A butterfly fluttered by, its wings moving delicately. It came close to me. I reached my hand out to grab it, but it flew away, and I saw it no~~W~~ more.

I saw the ants moving in the grass, seeking food and marching along like an army, so ready and military like. Two red lady bugs were slowly going up the stem of a flower. I watched, fascinated with it all. I felt the wind on my face.

Slowly the afternoon wore away to dark shadows; the afternoon rolled on, and the heat reeled off into the distance.



I got up slowly to my feet, feeling fine and again strong. When I go back to the city, mother would not recognize me, I said to myself. She would come up to me and say, My, how fat and brown Paul is now!

I walked slowly along the brown country road, the sun glimmering its reflection in the blue water, the trees everywhere, here, there, near and far, everywhere the trees again and again, the road so long, so short it seemed, myself, here, walking along the road, thinking, This is the life, the life. Joyous life.

And thus in this mood of complete freedom and joy I reached the ranch.

Where have you been?<sup>2</sup> my uncle asked me.

Out in the woods, I said.

So long?

Yes, I said.

What have you been doing? my aunt interrupted.

Nothing.

Nothing?

Come, wash yourself, my aunt said. Dinner will be ready soon.

Paul is looking much better now, I heard my aunt say to my uncle.

The country is good for him, uncle said.

And then my aunt went into the kitchen to prepare for dinner. And that night I ate ravenously.

What more can I say about the ensuing days, days of new and strange adventure, discovering new and little things so trifling, yet so important, the gardener in the garden, the



the flowers, here and there, life flooding gushing with the tide of nature.

Ah, this is the life, I said.

The joy in life came with the rippling of grass, the singing of a bird, a simple meal, wholesome and pure. Indeed the country had gripped me completely.

And one day I saw the gardener in the walk again.

How are you today? he asked.

Fine, said I.

You are looking much much better, said he.

I am going out to the city soon, I said.

You must come in again next summer, he said.

I surely will, I said.

The days went by like a smooth gliding river. My father came into the country one day to take me back to the city.

And only when I was about to leave that I noticed a sad and depressed feeling, a feeling of tears and weeping, unable to comprehend this very strange feeling that had come over me so suddenly.

And when my father saw me he said, Why, Paul, you're crying. I never knew you to cry before.

It was then that I turned my face, ashamed, yet so happy.

Then driving along the country road, the trees whizzing by, my father said to me, Paul, do you like the country?

Yes, father, I said.

Would you like to live in the country?

I like to, said I.

Slowly, slowly the country yielded away to the city.

I could not help feeling said and lonely, leaving all this,



so lovely, so beautiful like a hannting tune echoing from the jewelled strings of a harp.

But I had acquired something new, a new outlook on life, and I was sad no more.

I drew in deep breaths of pure sweet air.

On and on we went, the country disappearing to the back of us, and soon the tall stately trees gave way to the hills.

And while the car skimmed the country road, I said to myself, Could one short week make such a difference in me? Am I no longer the weakling who is always ~~af~~raid of people and life, unable to be myself, hiding behind a shell of fear.

Slowly we reached the main highway, and the car raced along with the wind.

The sky darkened, and the lights of the autos shone like a bright beacon. And we reached the city.

Immediately right there, the darkness closing in on me, the city lights bursting forth into light, I knew the difference. I saw the city as unclean, filthy, unwholesome of life and being.

Are you glad to be ~~home~~? said my father.

I guess so, said I.

I see that the country has gripped you completely, he said.

I like it better than the city now, I said.

Then we drove on again, and familiar scenes, the park, the library, all familiar, the tall skyscrapers again, new and yet so old.

Now we turned the corner. I saw a lad in a blue shirt coming out of the corner grocery store. A dog was barking loudly.



I thought of my little attic, stuffy and hot, then again of the cold winter and its bleak wind, of myself, and how much taller have I grown. Would I have to bend my head some more? Is my little room too small for me now?

And while thinking, scenes of the country, <sup>of</sup> ## lakes and green trees, the car stopped. We reached home. My brother Frankie saw me, and he went inside quickly shouting, Paul is back, Paul is back, mother.

My mother came out.

She came down the stairs.

My, how brown and healthy you are now, Paul, she said. You look so much fatter. Did you have a good time in the country?

Yes, mother, said I.

My brother Frankies said, Daddy, did you bring out any fruits for me?

My father reached down for some pears. Here, they are for you, he said to Frankie.

Could I eat it now?

Just one, father said.

My mother brought in something for me. I ate a great deal.

This is the most I have # ever seen you eat, mother said to me.

I am very hungry, said I.

You know, said my mother to father, Paul is so different, I could not believe my eyes.

The country is good for him, father said.



After eating I went back to my room how different it seems now, so small, so tiny, just a little atom of space.

And now the window is open, and I am sitting on my low stool, looking far out into the city below me. The electric lights from the buildings, from the high roofs, from above shine down into the mass of moving humanity below.

Yet very far in the distance where the sun goes to sleep for the night, I can still see a very faint light. A thin strip of blue announces that there, far away, the sun is still giving warmth.

So here I am, just back from the country, a newer and more important person, one who has communed with nature, one who is able now to be different, away and apart, grasping little patterns and intricate details of life in the simple things of living.

Moment after moment, the clock tickling away, the darkness gradually seeping over the city, here, in my room, sitting on a small stool, satisfied after the trip tonight, the gardener in the country, working in the flower beds, myself, speeding away over the country road, my father downstairs saying, Paul should go into the country again, and my mother answering, He looks much better now, so much stronger and healthier, then again, myself, here, looking into the darkness, the city, my city, below, knowing that I am not the same, never can be the same, no more the timid, the weak and fearful boy, for now, here, I am strong again, and no more would I ever be what I was.

The moments that follow are sweet, secret, uncomprehensible, delicate, intricate.



For the first time I have discovered myself again, here, now, sitting in the stool, looking far out into the city below, there, in the country, in the blue river, my ##### soul is reflected, in the trees, my voice is speaking, in the floating clouds, myself, ####ing away somewhere, to someolace, in the ground, walking, in the flowers, in the sun, and now here, outside the tall skyscrapers, traveling upwards, like the buildings, strong, silent, yet seeing all, knowing all, saying nothing, the minutes flew by quickly.

My room is dark, but I see a certain light, secret, strange, coming from somewhere I cannot explain, feeling that inside of me I am not the same, and that forever and ever I am made over completely.

And thus it is, this day, this very day, in my room, so strange and yet so secret.

My mother comes up now. She is standing beside me. She says to me, Paul, do you like to live in the country?

Yes, mother, I say.

When would you like to go again, she says.

When I finish school, I say.

You look so much better, Paul, she says to me.

I am, mother, I say.

My mother goes downstairs. I am alone again.

I open the light, and I see my room, no longer ugly, no longer a stuffy little palce, no longer a little hole in the top of the house.

I go to bed now. I undress. I lay myself on the bed, yearning beyond now toward the summer when I shall go to my



uncle's ranch again.

My mother comes up again.

Are you asleep, Paul, she say.

No, mother.

Good night, Paul.

Good night, mother.

She comes over and kiss me on the lips.

I lay down on my bed, staring out into the window, seeing the darkness, feeling myself new again, thinking of the country once again, my uncle's ranch, and inside of me I hear a voice saying, No matter what happens in the past or present, or shall happen in the future, there is always tomorrow and the dawn, the everlasting tomorrow of courage, the dawn of undying hope.

Then I dark my light and go to sleep, contented, satisfied, sure and confident that now at last I have discover the secret of life and happiness.

I look out the window, and for a long time I look.

I go to sleep then.



On Kearny Street

Really, he didn't want to over to Frisco, but his two boy companions insisted so earnestly that he finally consented. He put two dollars in his pockets, hoping to have as good a time as the two dollars could bring.

"And besides," the first boy said to him, "you haven't been over there for such a long time, and the trip would do you a world of good. We could go to the beach, then perhaps afterwards we could take in a show."

"I don't like to see shows in Frisco," he said, "I enjoy them better over here in Oakland. Somehow when I see a show in Frisco, I feel strange."

"That's exactly the way I feel too," the second boy companion said, "but boy, when I see one of those hot shows with a lot of nude dames, I don't feel strange."

The first boy broke in suddenly, "Say, let's go to one of those nude shows tonight. I haven't seen one in a long time."

The second boy said, "I know one swell place where they say the dirtiest jokes, and are the dames hot!"

The first boy turned to the third boy, "Would you like to go?"

He had never seen a dirty show in his life, yet secretly he felt like going. But he said aloud, "Well, I don't know."

"What'd you mean you don't know? It's about time you should go around and learn something about life. I bet you don't even know what a nude dame looks like."



The third boy felt his face grow red with heat. He knew what a nude dame looks like, but he never spoke about such things to anyone, not even to his boy friends.

They took the nickel ferry down at First and Broadway, mingling with a lot of poor ragged men, ladies and old women.

"It's been a long time since I rode on this nickel ferry," he said, "about five or six years ago."

The second boy spoke up, "There's no use paying more when you can get over there for only five cents."

All the way over, he looked over the familiar sights, the estuary, the old ships near the docks, the smell of garbage, the scum of the waterfront. It seems so long ago yet he remembered everything, this old boat, the same seats and benches, the smell of old wood that are wet.

He was surprised to see how fast the time ~~time~~ fly away! Passing under the new bridge, he ~~found~~ found himself admiring the structure of steel and strength. So this was the longest bridge in the world. It seems so small, but he knew that it was large, ~~immense~~.

When they reached the city, the three of them took the number five car and went toward the beach, to see the seals and the waves on the mighty ~~big~~ ocean. It was a long ride, tedious and dreary, and when he reached the beach, and came out of the car, he inhaled the fresh ocean breeze and felt better.

The dipper was rumbling along its track, and memories of bygone days came rushing to him again. Yet here nothing was changed! There was the fun house. Over there the swan



dive, the merry-go-round. Nothing was changed at all.

"I'm hungry," the first boy said, "let's get some hot dogs."

He disliked hot dogs immensely, yet eating it out of doors near the beach, he discovered a new appetitie and flavor. Really, he felt much <sup>younger</sup> and <sup>peppier</sup> in a long time.

The whole thing was a confusion to him. One moment he was zooming down the dipper, another moment he was under the ground in pit-black darkness, riding along the darkened tunnel with pictures of ghosts and skeletons along the walls.

He remembered he bought an ice cream, a glass of orange juice, and a hamburger. His two companions too were having the time of their life.

They went into the Penny Arcade. He dropped a peany into a machine to see "A Night in a Turkish Bath." All he saw was a women with bare breasts and body, sitting on a bed. There was nothing about a bath or Turkish about it. He was really having fun.

At five o'clock they took the car back to town. They went to Chinatown, looking at the sights. Finally they went into "The New Shanghai" for dinner. It was expensive, but he didn't care. He found he had only fifty cents left.

It was still early, so they finally decided to walk around for awhile.

From Chinatown they <sup>walk</sup> down to Kearny Street.

The three of them walked along the street, staring at the buildings and people.

The first boy said, "You know, they tell me this street



is full of hot dames, you know, whores."

second

The ~~second~~ boy said, "Say, I know a guy that told me a lot about them. And the things he says. Why, you ain't heard nothing yet until you hear him talk."

The third boy said nothing, but he listened with attention.

"Tell us something about it," the first boy remarked.

"Well," the second boy began, "this friend of mine he's one of those unmarried playboys, and he got to have his fun. He comes over here once a month, and he tried the different hotels. But there's one he liked the best, because of a girl by the name of Jackie, young and beautiful. He said she'd take anybody, any race."

The third boy felt ashamed, yet he pretended that he was interested.

"You sound as if you knew about about such things," the first boy said.

"I do," he replied.

"Did you have any experience of your own?

"~~What~~ experience?"

"Sex experience, of course."

"Oh, that." He smiled.

The third boy was all confused now. It was the first time in his life that he ever heard such frank talk.

"~~What~~ shall we do now?" he finally put in nonchalantly.

"We could go to a nude show," the second boy said.

"Okay with me," the first boy put in.

"What about you?" the second boy said to the third boy.

"If you two want to go, I guess we go."



"Jesus, those shows sure are hot. Those dames take off everything, and if you sit up front close, you see everything, everything!"

"Everything?" said the second boy.

"That's what I said."

"Say, let's hurry and get a good seat up front."

Night was beginning to fall steadily by this time, and the lights of the stores and buildings began to shine out. The three boys walked down the street. Tired and ragged men walked along the street, hunger and sadness evident in their eyes.

The street fairly reeked with the smell of uncleanness, of filth.

Outside the theatre there were many pictures of nude girls, all with bare full breasts, and a light veil of clothing which hid just enough to make the men <sup>want to</sup> go in to see the rest.

The third boy looked around.

"I hope nobody I know see me go in here."

"Don't be so timid," the second boy said, "You act like ~~you are~~ going into a whore house instead of in a theatre."

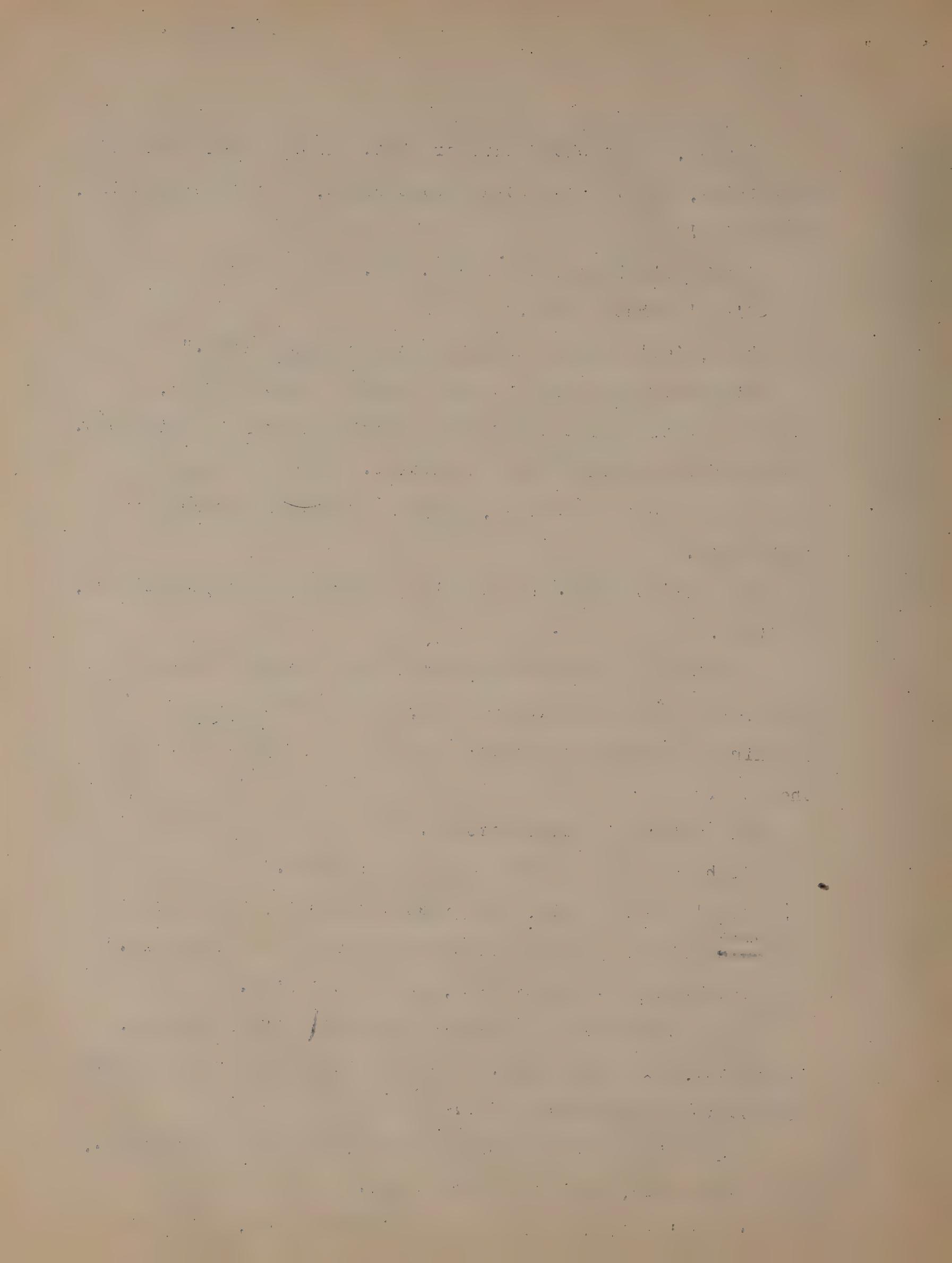
They bought three tickets, and went inside.

The interior of the theatre was foul with stale air. It was very dark and small. The hot breath of men and cigars mingled in an unpleasant odor.

"I'm going to seat near the front," the first boy said.

"Same here," said the second boy.

"I can't sit up front," the third boy said, "it gives



a  
me ~~#~~ headache."

"But you can't see the naked dames out there. They turned the lights low."

"I'll sit in the middle," he said.

The two boys went up front.

He sat in the middle section, feeling nauseated with the foul and unhealthy air inside the theatre.

He looked around him. He saw bald-headed men thronging the first front rows. Negroes, Filipinos, Mexicans, Orientals, all were here for one purpose, relief of their sexual desire.

However, there was a long dreary picture, followed by a two week's old newsreel, and some tedious and dreary short subjects. Inside, the building was hot with the stench of dirty men, and the loud rumbling of stomachs.

But the show ended, and then the bright glaring lights were put on. Men in the back seats began to rush down to the front rows, their eyes bright and eager to gaze upon what they know, yet which they never seemed to get enough of.

A dirty, red curtain closed itself on the stage. Two young men came out with trays in their hands.

One of them yelled out in a loud voice, so that all might hear clearly, "I have here some dirty songs printed, but never sold anywhere. You can't buy these songs at any prize, but tonight for every big piece of Esimo ~~one~~ that you buy, we will give you one copy of these dirty songs absolutely ~~free~~. Only ten cents, and you get these songs free."



Here, let me read you one of them, and you will know what I mean."

He held the paper up, and began to read slowly. After he finished, the audience laughed loudly. Some of the men squirmed in their seats, feeling hot and uncomfortable.

"And I have another treat for you. For every box of candy French we sell, we will give away one of these new ~~French~~ mirrors. They have just been imported, and you can't buy them anywhere at any price. But tonight as a treat we are giving away one of these mirrors to every box of candy you purchase. You hold these mirror in front of you. If you look carefully you'll see two nude French girls, completely nude, mind you, and by moving the frame this way and that, you can do whatever you wish them to do. Who'll take the first box?"

He came down from the stage, and walked slowly up the candy aisles, holding the boxes of candy in his hands. Men reached in their pockets for the thin dime, more desirous of getting the French mirror than the candy.

The third boy sat there, while the men walked up and down, selling the Eskimo pies and candies. A man who sat next to him bought a box of candy. He looked into the mirror. Suddenly a loud lewd laughter emerged from the man's gaping mouth. He slapped his leg loudly. The laughter was so contagious that other men in the audience broke out into hearty laughter.

From the stage at this moment a loud musical instrument announced that the show was about to start. The red curtain parted, and revealed a comedian and a straight leading man exchanging dirty worn out jokes, of sex, love, and women.



Then there followed more dirty and tedious jokes about sex, marriage, and lust. The Filipinos and old men gobbled up the whole proceedings with zest.

When the boy first heard the jokes, he felt a little strange. He did not think that people would go up on the stage, and say such things, so utterly frank, so utterly sexy, and so dirty. Yet when he got in the spirit of the thing, his strangeness disappeared, but he did not enjoy the show for one single moment at all.

Then there followed sketches of obscenity, their meanings } so obvious that no one could possibly misunderstand them. The boy felt a ~~bad~~ taste in his mouth. He noticed that many men squirmed in their seats.

A group of beautiful girls, half nude came out after that. It was very evident in their faces that there were many men in their life, tired, haggard, no life, no zest.

The piano started to play, and the dancers shook their hips, swishing them behind and in front of them. Then they turned their backs to the audience. They began to turn their hips slowly directly in front of the men in the first rows. To top the whole thing off, they presented an amateur dance, and followed it through with a dreary song, with everyone singing in a different key.

The curtained closed again. The bright glaring light dimmed to a soft orange color. A girl came out from the side of the curtain, and began to parade herself back and forth on the stage. Once in awhile she winked at the audience. She sang a hot song, although what the words were, it was



hard to tell.

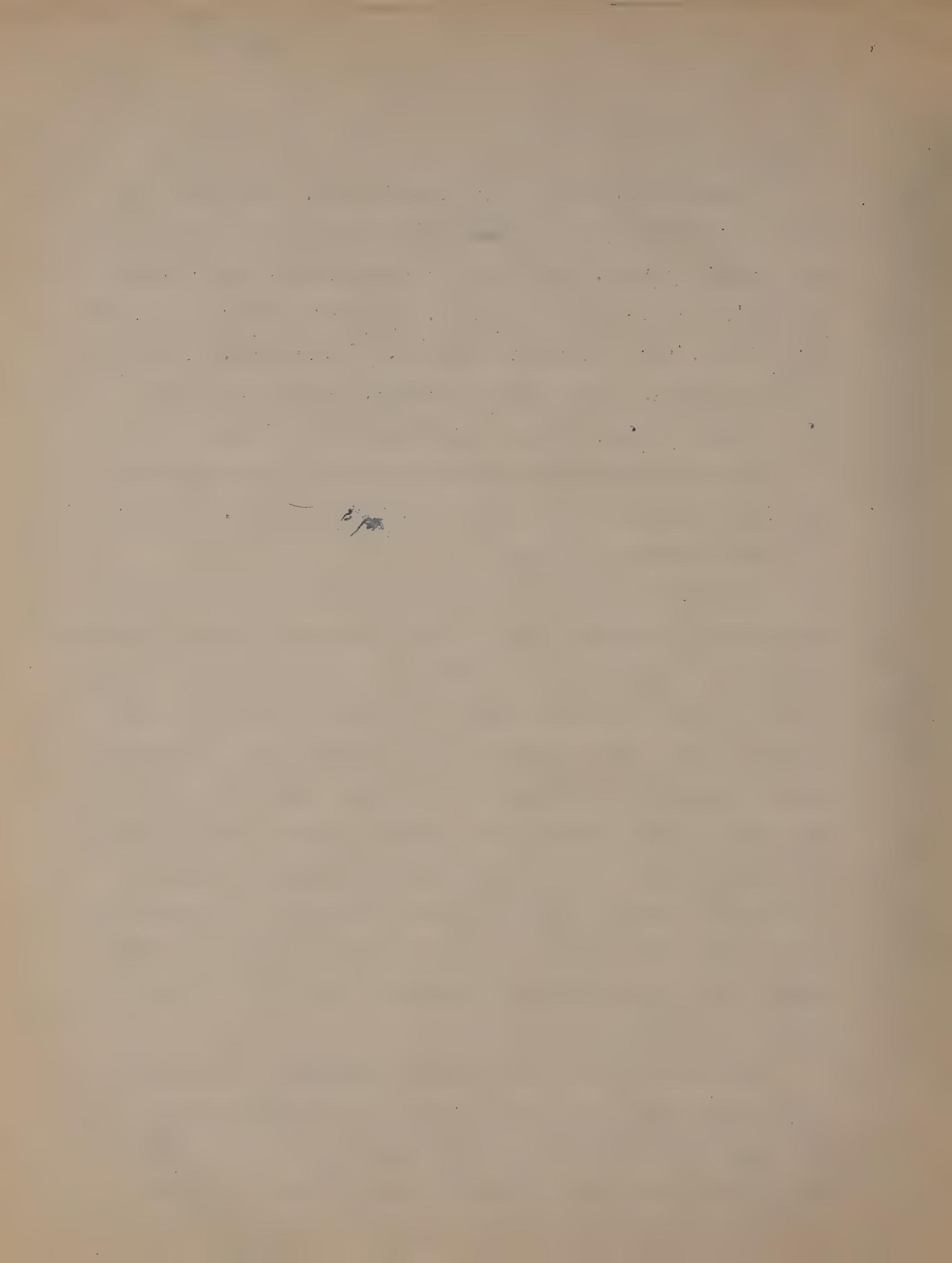
Then the hot part of the show started. The girl took off her brassiere, showing ~~two~~ round full breasts. Some of the men sighed audibly. Now the girl had only the small piece of decorative cloth around her hips. She went behind the curtain once again. Now the lights dimmed to a dull blue. The girl came out again. Once more she paraded across the stage, her breasts moving, jerking, like two rubber balls.

The boy could hardly distinguish them, all he saw were two lumps of white flesh with a dot in the middle. He felt a shiver run down his spine.

Slowly, but very artistically, the girl began to remove the shining decorative cloth around her hips. The men stretched forward in their seats. But the girl fooled them all. Underneath she had on another piece of decorative cloth of a triangular shape. She went behind the curtain again. Now the lights dimmed to a very dark blue, a dull blue that blurred the sight of the audience to a certain degree. Now the girl was almost nude. In full face of the audience she took off the small piece of cloth, and was completely and unashamedly nude before the audience. A man whistled between his teeth. Others were too interestedly looking at the facts of life to notice the whistling.

The boy sat there, more or less immobile. He wondered how he would feel if he sat up close and saw everything. The young girl walked the whole length of the stage, while the men stretched their necks staring straight up at her.

Then she went behind the curtain, and everyone took a breath after the suspense.



Then there followed more girls, in a repetition of the same acts. Once the novelty is gone, the boy did not feel the hot blood gushing through his system. It was all familiar now, like something he knew before, and is experiencing again.

When the grand finale came, there was nothing more to be felt. He was impartial, just looking at a plain ordinary act, no more novelty or enthusiasm.

When they came out of the theatre, he felt a slight dizziness in his head. The stuffy interior of the theatre caused it, he knew.

"Well, how did you like it?" the second boy asked him.

"Oh, all right, I guess."

"Say, did you see that second girl? Boy, she's certainly a hot one. She's the only one that I could really see clearly. I saw every bit of her."

Then turning to the third boy, he asked, "Did you see clearly way back there?"

"No, not very clearly," he answered.

"You should have sat with us."

"Maybe I should."

And that night when ~~he~~ <sup>they</sup> came back on the boat, he went up deck. There he breathed in the fresh ocean breeze which <sup>swirled</sup> into the bay. Looking toward the skyline not so far ~~away~~, away, he saw his city, Oakland, and he knew that now he was leaving the distasteful scene behind him, and that once more he was heading toward the clean city, with all the filth and dirt behind him.

He breathed the fresh air, and felt much better.



### Home Sweet Home

He was but only twelve, but being twelve he felt like fifteen, for he was very much different from other boys, different in the sense that he felt separated from them. He felt above them in intelligence, in the understanding of life around him, in his sensitive feeling of capturing the intangible something that sometimes baffled him, but which sometimes only visualized the more clearly the strangeness of the universe around him. He was a quiet lad, deep in thought, and sometimes melancholy too. He felt like a small minute atom buried underneath the vastness of space and time, like a lonely and sad melody which echoed for the moment in the symphonic rhythm of time, and which suddenly lost itself into the weeping night.

Here he was just barely twelve, but most mature in thoughts and action, and he was able to piece together and connect together different aspects of life and movement, and to understand that they made but one answer to him. There was only one thing that he regretted, and that was that he came from a poor family, a family which did not understand him, so it seemed to him, a family which was common, poor, and sometimes destitute in need and wants. He felt that he did not belong, and many times he had a deep yearning to be out of this rut, this poorness which he disliked so much. He wanted to live in a big house where he <sup>could</sup> ~~can~~ have a room by himself, where he did not have to sleep with two or three others in the same



bed in the same room. He was tired of wearing stockings with holes in them, tired of always eating potatoes with meat, tired of going hungry at meals when there was not enough to eat. In fact, he was disgusted with everything, but mostly of being poor. It was so terrible to be poor, so humiliating, not able to have good clothes, not able to eat good food, not able to have pleasures like other boys and girls.

He wanted to have the feeling that he could belong to a family which could afford at least one automobile. everybody had an automobile, it seemed, except his family. Often he revolted at the unfairness of everything. Why must other people have so much, and he so little. Why must people dress up in ermine coats, and wear diamond rings in their red fingers? Why must they have so much money, and here he was, in a family that was almost starving to death. Nothing to eat, but potatoes, potatoes, meat, meat. It was awful, terribly awful going on like this, week after week, month after month, year after year. How much long<sup>er</sup> was it going to last? How much longer could he stand it? Not for long, he felt sure of that.

As far as he could remember, he never had a cent of his own to spend. He always wore clothing that ~~was~~ were handed down to him by his larger brothers. He never went to a show with any of his own money. He never felt happy. He always felt sad and lonely, so far away from all that he desired.

Sometimes mama gave him a nickel for show, but it was not enough to go to the high class theatres where people could



sit down in soft cushioned seats instead of the hard wooden  
~~seats~~  
<sup>ones</sup> in the cheap theatres where one could see three or four  
feature pictures for a nickel.

He was poor, he knew that, but must they always be like that, and must they always eat potatoes which he disliked very much? He liked so much to drink a glass of tomato juice every day, and maybe in the evening drink another glass and finished that off with a nice peach salad covered with creamy mayonnaise. That would be wonderful, and he couldn't imagine anything to top that. He would have all that someday, someday when he was rich. Then he would buy mama a good house, and maybe one or two cars. These thoughts filled his mind with gladness and joy, and it was pleasant to dream of them even though they were but imaginary. It was good to dream of them.

It was good to dream of them even though sometimes mama made him mad, especially when she scolded him when she was mad. Frequently, he suffered in silence, for he was not one who spoke much. Sometimes when she scolded him, he would answer back in madness, and from his mouth there would come forth a continuous train of words which surprised him, and which even surprised his mother too.

He was not one who spoke very often, always being one who listened a great deal, knowing everything, but revealing nothing, hearing everything, but speaking nothing. His friends often thought of him as a stupid and colorless person, and he paid no attention to them, absolutely no attention to them.



He knew too that his father had not much money, at least not enough to buy things that he liked. He wanted good clothes, good looks, a radio, an electric clock, and all other conveniences which were denied him for so long.

His father worked hard year after year, and yet somehow he never had any money left. He never had time for pleasure. Father and mama worked and worked, and still they hadn't got a radio, no automobile, and they still continued to eat potatoes and meat in the evening meals. His brothers and sisters were thin and ugly, and he was ashamed to be one of them.

He made up his mind that never would he become one of them, one of those people that always worked but never got anywhere. He wanted security, success, and most of all, he wanted money. He never had money before, and he made up his mind that he was going to get it, and lots of it when the opportunity comes.

He decided that he would never get married, not if he was to become a person like his father. Work, work, work, his father's life. No pleasure or anything.

He decided that perhaps he would go away into the lonely hills, there to live forever in the solitude of time and space. He disliked very much to be in company with other people and more and more he disliked living in the old wooden house, the only home he ever lived in. An old house with no linoleum on the floor, and no curtains on the windows.

Why must he be born in a poor family, a family with no money, nothing, but just work, work, work. Then when he grows up, he would be like one of them, working until his dying days,



*then*

and perhaps even he would arrive nowhere, still lost and lonely as ever.

His sensitive nature made him conscious of the smallest things. He was ashamed to go out with mama for she wore the same clothes she wore two or three years ago. He was ashamed mostly because he was poor. He liked so much to go around with rich boys who changed their clothing every day, and who had such nice looks and appearances. He, himself, was a sad and drab looking person, and he was ashamed of himself, ashamed of his clothes, his looks, ashamed because he was the son of a poor man.

And his life, one continuous rhythm of work and labor, no fun, not anything pleasant. He shuddered often when he thought of it. Not for me, not for me, he said often, I won't be one of them. I would be independ~~X~~ant. I would be myself. I just won't be one of them.

Sometimes he felt depressed because of his environment. He wondered why father was poor, why mama~~looked~~ older and older as the years go by. Look at the parents of ~~other~~ boy, they seemed to get younger and younger and more prosperous too. Why can't father be one of them? Why can't mama have good clothes too?

It must be nice to be rich, he thought. No worries or anything. It was awful to be poor. He could see it in the eyes of his father, in mama's eyes. There wasn't any gladness or laughter, there wasn't any light of hope. There was only the bare necessity of living, the making of enough to tie things over until another month. What a drab life it all was,



poor food, no fun, no enjoyment, but just a continuous flow of dull monotonous work. Year after year he watched his parents go on like this, and when the years passed, they became more bent, ~~more~~ <sup>more</sup> older in years and spirit, and he was saddened by it all.

Many times he had a strong desire to run away, to get away from it all, to go far away where he would see more of the happiness that his heart yearned for, to separate himself from this misery and suffering. Yet he was reluctant to leave, for here was a home small as it is, but a home never-the less. At odd moments like this, he had a peculiar feeling of security, of peace, of love. Then after that moment of exaltation had passed, he again realized how hopeless it all was. There must be something better than that is life. There must be, and he determined that someday he would find out what it was.

Thus his time passed away, more lonely than ever.

Many times he thought of leaving the house, but it never happened, because always there was something that drew him back.

Then one day he couldn't stand anymore of it, feeling so hopeless, so sad, that he knew ~~if~~ <sup>if</sup> he continued on like that, he too would soon be one of them, one of them who went on year after year in dreary look, losing all perspective of events and happenings, conscious only of themselves caught in the maelstrom of daily work. <sup>home</sup> He didn't want to be one of them.

He decided to run away from <sup>home</sup>, to go as far away as he could, maybe to far away India to see strange lands and strange



people. He ~~had~~ made up his mind definitely after mama ~~had~~ scolded him that morning.

No wonder she was always so irritable, so cross. She was poor, and she never had enough to wear, nor enough to eat, for that matter. He didn't blame her at all. It was this poorness that had caused all this trouble.

I'll run away, he ~~had~~ made up his mind, and I won't ever come back to the house again. I won't ever come back to such a house where nobody has anything to eat except potatoes and meat, and no milk to drink.

That evening, still furious with everything, he came out of the house into the loneliness of street. He was determined to sever from his memory all the futility, the sadness, the whole scene of misery, and he went down the street, glancing back now and then at the house. A sudden aloneness came over him as he realized what he ~~was~~ doing. He had a sudden desire to go ~~#~~ back, but he hesitated. No, I would not ever go back, he said, never. He turned his head away, the tears streaming down his face.

He would go as far away as possible, perhaps to a strange land, and maybe he would die of a bad disease. Then mama would cry her head off, wishing she had not scolded him. Yes, that is what he would do. He would die, and then mama would regret she had ever scolded him at all.

He found himself crying suddenly, unable to stop. It eased him to cry out into the silence of the night where no one saw him or cared at all. He wept to his heart's content. After awhile he felt frightened. In the darkness the



city seemed monstrous, ugly and cruel. He left the dark street and went toward the town where bright electric lights glistened out like big diamonds.

Everything seemed so prosperous here, so many people, so many stores, so many lights, so much money. By looking at the sights, he couldn't imagine how anyone could be poor. Everybody looked happy and gay, young girls, young boys, laughing merrily, so contented and satisfied.

Here was life as he liked it, life at its best, stirring, fast, something happening every minute. No potatoes or meat. What a relief it was, this gayety, the spontaneous laughter and joy, this ever rushing tide of humanity who did not seem to have any miseries of sadness. Here was life, and he was enthralled by it all.

In the street corner he saw a drunk man lying on the sidewalk, his hands clenching an empty bottle. A strong smell of liquor was evident in the air, and he walked up close to look at the man. He noticed that near the drunkard, ~~right~~ close to him, was a silver quarter, partly hidden by the sleeve of the drunkard's coat. He tried to pick it up, but was afraid, afraid that someone might see him. He wanted the quarter so much, it was such a large amount of money to him.

He dropped his cap near the drunkard. He stooped to pick the cap up, at the same time grasping hold of the quarter. When he felt it in his hands, a slight shiver ran through his body. It was the first quarter that he ever possessed, the first real money that he knew was his own. Well, it was his, because what could a drunk man do with a quarter.



He walked up the street a different man, a man who had something of his own, something which belonged only to himself.

I bet those rich boys haven't got as much as I have now, he thought in pleasure. He took the money and looked at it under a street lamp. Yes, it was real, real money at last. And he owned all of it, the whole silver quarter. But what to with it, he wondered, yes, what?

Yes, I would go to a show, a high class theatre, and I would sit in a soft seat that doesn't hurt my behind. His eyes glistened as he thought of it. He at last could afford to go to a ten cents theatre.

He stopped in front of a vaudeville house where the bright lights shone out with dazzling brilliantness, and where pretty pictures beautified the walls with their glorious hues of colors. He was amazed at the richness of everything. Even the man who took the tickets was dressed in an uniform. The ushers were beautiful girls who held flashlights in their hands.

He bought a ticket, and was handed fifteen cents in change. In the theatre lobby he dropped a nickel in a machine for some chewing gum. He ~~had~~ still a dime left, one whole dime. It was a pleasant sensation to still have a dime in his hands.

He felt the softness of the carpet under his feet. How wonderful it was. If he was rich, he would be able to have a house with carpets in every room, even carpets on the stairs and hallways.

An usher led him to <sup>a</sup> seat in the middle. He felt good that an usher took the trouble to lead him to a seat, thrilled



*when he saw*

when he felt the softness of the seat, startled ~~at~~ <sup>^</sup> the beauty of the interior of the theatre.

He seemed to enjoy the show more in a high class theatre. The projection machine didn't stop in the middle of a good scene like the way it did at the five cents theatre.

Besides, nobody spat on the floor, or drank heavy liquor, and best of all, nobody talked. It was wonderful, just wonderful.

When the show ended, he moved to a nearer seat, so as to be able to see the stage show better. A real orchestra was playing, about ten men, all dressed in clean black suits. There was no cheapness around here, he saw, everything was class, everything. He felt a thrill of being rich for the moment, a sensation of accomplishment and triumph.

The people around him were different. They seemed well fed, well groomed, happy and prosperous. He felt sure that they didn't eat potatoes and meat every evening, and that they never really ~~ever~~ go hungry at meal times. He admired the fur coats of the women, the splendid suits of the men. Suddenly he looked at himself, and he felt ashamed. His clothes looked old and ragged, cheap and humiliating. He kept his eyes on the stage, afraid of catching the glance of one who might be looking at him.

When the lights darkened, he felt better. In the darkness he didn't feel conspicuous at all.

The heavy curtain slowly opened, displaying a stage of dazzling colors.

He didn't think that such beauty existed in the world,



such glorious colors, breath-taking, awesome. He was fascinated with the moving lights, red, green, purple, blue. The whole thing was like a lovely landscape which suddenly came to life, something out of another world.

He was enthralled with the movement of dash and color, the ever changing scene, the unexpectedness of songs and music. For one brief moment he was one of them, one of the rich people who eat<sup>three</sup> meals a day, and who ~~goes~~ to the movies at least once a week. He had forgotten completely about India, about mama who scolded him that morning. He was only conscious of himself in the theatre, admiring the colors, the music, the songs around him,

It felt nice to be rich, ~~even~~ though it was all in his imagination.

In the middle of the program a blind boy was led out into the stage. He was a good looking boy, wearing <sup>a</sup> blue coat, a pair of white trousers, white shoes. The boy in the audience was so interested in seeing the blind boy that he did not hear what ~~#~~ the master of ceremonies <sup>said</sup> say.

The blind boy stood in the middle of the stage, the strong light gleaming down upon him, showing his features clearly.

He was blind ~~for~~ life, the master of ceremonies said, ever since he was born, he was blind. A sigh went over the audience. He was going to play the xylophone entirely by memory, the master of ceremonies continued. Another sigh went over the audience, a sort of murmur.

The boy in the audience sat there, admiring the blind boy, wondering how life was to be, always in the dark, unable



to see anything, always having people lead him around. Suddenly thinking about all this, the boy in the audience cried. It was bad to be poor, but it was much worse to be blind, having one's eyes shut away from the light forever and ever.

The blind boy picked up two sticks, and with accuracy he hit upon note after note without a moment hesitation. Somehow, watching him, the boy in the audience began to weep silently to himself. There was something so beautiful about it, something so noble about the blind boy, something he was not able to explain, but nevertheless <sup>somthing he</sup> felt in the silent hush of the audience. Hardly anyone stirred, only the silent admiration, the quiet gazing at one who refused to be defeated by a physical handicap. The blind seemed so admirable standing there, unconscious of himself, slowly beating out the song with his unflinching accuracy.

Moment after moment a wave of electrical discharge surged through the boy in the audience. He was lifted high above the world for the moment. The music coming through the silence of the theatre contained an ethereal beauty which stirred him as never before. He forgot that he was in a <sup>conscious</sup> theatre, he was only ~~conscious~~ of a symphonic beauty which flowed to the very depths of his heart, a song of weeping, but not a song of sadness. It was a melody which made him want to cry, not because it made him sad, but because it made him immensely happy. He was ~~surprised~~ surprised at his own emotion.

When the thundering applause greeted the cessation of the song, the boy in the audience wept, and he was not ashamed.



The ethereal beauty was ceased, but the echo remained in his mind, and he could not forget it. He found himself joining the thudding applause, clapping his hands with all his might.

The blind boy took a bow, but the audience was not satisfied. It wanted some more.

After awhile a silent hush fell. Then without any hesitation the blind boy began to play Home Sweet Home. From the stage there came forth a song about home, about love, a song of devotion and beauty.

And as he sat there, the boy in the audience was swept into the spirit of the song. He never knew how much music could stir him. He never realized how he could weep over such a simple melody, a melody which seemed to wring his heart out. There was an universal message in the song, a vision of a simple home, a fireplace, the ~~#~~ gentle, yet tender care of a mother. More and more tender the song became, until it was intoxicating in its beauty, and when it finally ceased, it was like the departure of something lovely into the spiritual world beyond.

The music remained in the heart of everyone. The boy in the audience wept again. The blind boy and his soft melodies still surrounded him, and he could not forget them. The anger in his heart ceased, and he suddenly wished to go back home, to go back to his warm bed, back to the potatoes and meat, back to home sweet home. He forgot about India, he didn't want to die.



He only wanted the security of a home, a home sweet home.

And again he began to weep, feeling lonely and lost in the emptiness of time and space. He ran out of the theatre quickly, running as fast as he could. How strange it all seemed now. The bright lights no longer had ~~any~~ fascination. He did not want to be rich anymore. He did not care for automobiles anymore. All he wanted to do was to go home, back to the house he knew and really loved.

He ran through the dark street, sobbing, still unable to forget the blind boy, still remembering the haunting memories of those two beautiful songs.

When he saw the house once again, he no longer saw any ugliness in it. It was beautiful, and it was clean and good.

He ran into the house, and when he saw his mother, he ran toward her, weeping, crying his heart out. Weeping, he thought again of the blind boy in the theatre playing Home Sweet Home, and he continued to cry, hugging his mother close to him, the haunting tunes of the song echoing in his ears.



Solitary confinement in the small room, the loud noise of automobiles, and the deep rumbling of human voices, the radio, Station KNX in Hollywood, a nine tube Zenith split second tuning radio, the loud clattering of the worn out typewriter, a stack of whitepaper, a typing eraser, the story to be done now, searching, the idea, where? wandering away, apart, in somnambulistic detachment.

The ten fingers moving rapidly over the keys, thinking, Now I must think of style, of technique, of plot development, a good beginning, a logical title, and a short time to finish the story.

But the idea, where, oh where? sitting down suddenly saying, I am writing a story, but of what? the plot? how to begin? typing away furiously, quickly hoping that somehow the unconscious mind would supply the story.

The round typing eraser, almost hardly used at all, how many trashy stories had it erased, making a clean space for a new letter, another mistake, tragedy, another piece of clean paper slipped in, erasing again. Fingers on the wrong keys.

Perhaps to talk about this early morning, eating a big bowl of whole wheat cereal, with sliced bananas, then a cup of chocolate, going up town, driving with brother Eric, the new automobile, flowing smoothly, almost an accident near Twelfth and Franklin, narrow escape, but no damage done, no damage done. Stopping at Fourteenth Street, double parking, the policeman coming up, No double parking, where is the driver? Inside. Tell him I want to see him when he



comes out. All right, officer. Then the quiet slipping away when the policeman was not looking, the shifting to second gear in the wrong place. Engine stopped suddenly, green light, the car should go, stepping on the gas, and the car started again, the honking of horns, then red light. To home.

Then the quiet slipping away to the room, locking the doors, listening to the radio, the urge to write, to write something, anything, pulling out the covers of the typewriter, slipping in a piece of paper, the impossibility of getting started, the tragedy of the thing, thinking he is a writer, but unable to write, just <sup>+</sup>staring, a young man. Could he write? Don't know yet? But the man and woman, You should continue with your writing, it is a shame if you should stop it. Coming home, thinking what the man and woman said. I am not so sure, how could I know I could write. I must be sure before I decide definitely. What is the use of becoming an unpublished writer, one whom no one knows, getting nowhere at all, arriving no where, lost in the printed page, a failure, artistically, financially. Remembering again, Do you wish to write for money? Of course, I do. Otherwise what is the use of writing. I need the money you know. My desire is to make fifty thousand dollars. Then the man staring at him, But why so much? That's not much, compared to what Kathleen Norris makes. She makes twenty-five thousand dollars every single month. It is only by making that amount that I can have confidence in myself, that I could believe that I am a writer. A writer cannot write well unless he has a little success, enough to give him confidence.



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Thinking again, it isn't how well you write that counts. It's how much you can make, the more the better. Why does one writer succeed, and another failure? Because one knows the tricks, and the other does not, and writing is a game of tricks. Success to the one that knows. Failure to the stupidity of the one who does not know.

Fifty thousand dollars isn't hard to acquire. Let's see, a best seller would bring in that amount, maybe more. I bet Anne Lindbergh made a huge amount of money with *North to the Orient*. You get ten percent royalties up to 2,500 copies, twelve and a half percent up to 5,000 copies, and fifteen percent for every copy over 5,000. Not bad, not bad at all. It isn't hard to make 50,000 dollars. No, not in this publishing business. I know, you can't fool me. One really good book would bring in that much.

Remembering again, You should write every day. That is the only way to learn how to write. Some authors devote so many hours a day to their writing, but he, thinking, to hell with the hours. I like to write when I like, how I like, whenever I like, and to hell with the hours. No writer, no good writer gets paid by the hour, only by the number of words he writes. Damn the hours.

Sitting there, the typewriter in front of him, remembering, every scene, every word, still unconvinced that he can write. The ~~radio~~ radio, This is the Columbia Broadcasting Company, the sound of the gongs, two seconds past seven, station KNX Hollywood, California.

The blue walls of the room, still to finish the novel he started, and to get some more short wave stations tonight.



I got station CJCA yesterday, he heard the announcer say, yes, in Oliver, but where the hell is Oliver, he did not know.

The typing paper going, going, one by one, the story, away somewhere. Loud jazz music, static from far away, the quickening of the pulse, the ideas is here, hours slipping into the minutes, the seconds springing into time, the story at last! ~~finished~~ finished. First class postage, two weeks, no answer, three weeks, no answer, perhaps the story is accepted, then the day, the envelope, ~~open~~ opening it, a rejection slip, do not despair, try try again. Again and again.

You will get your \$0,000 dollars yet. I got a hunch, and I am rarely wrong. Again and again. Try and try.

1. 1960 1961 1962 1963 1964 1965 1966 1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979 1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029 2030 2031 2032 2033 2034 2035 2036 2037 2038 2039 2040 2041 2042 2043 2044 2045 2046 2047 2048 2049 2050 2051 2052 2053 2054 2055 2056 2057 2058 2059 2060 2061 2062 2063 2064 2065 2066 2067 2068 2069 2070 2071 2072 2073 2074 2075 2076 2077 2078 2079 2080 2081 2082 2083 2084 2085 2086 2087 2088 2089 2090 2091 2092 2093 2094 2095 2096 2097 2098 2099 20100

### A Writer Analyzes Himself

For more than two years he had kept steadily at his work, always hoping for the time when he could experience the thrill of personal accomplishment, and during this period of expectation, he wondered often to himself, "Why is it that I worry so much about this work?" There was no answer except that he knew definitely that perhaps tomorrow, next month, he might be laid off, and then where would he be, what would he do? Has all this time spent in writing been worth something to him? Or has it been a complete waste of effort and energy?

He liked to think of it as something worthwhile, something he could depend on, and yet in the interior of his mind, he knew somehow that he must not expect too much, and that the future is just as unstable as ever. Many times he said, "If I had spent these two years in school, would I have gotten more out of myself?" He knew he would have learned many new things for he was one who had little difficulty in learning.

It seems so strange now to see himself writing, and getting money for it. Writing was the last thing in the world he would ever think of, and five years ago if someone were to tell him that someday he would be writing, he would laugh and think of it as a fantastic dream. And yet here he is, writing these many years.

"Is it a good thing for me to get paid for what I write at this very beginning?" he wondered often, and after two



years he knew that it was not good.

He said, "Everything I write, I get money for. I do not have to worry about rejection slips nor disappointment. and as a result, I have acquired a false confidence which I never should have. I have made no attempt to improve myself as rapidly as I desire, and I have kept on doing what I always have done. Are things too easy for me as a beginner in writing?" And much as he hated to think of it, he knew it was the truth.

Many times he thought back of the lives of other writers, was and there ~~was~~ none that he could think of who had an easy time when they first started. How many of them, spending from three to ten years ever got anywhere, and if they did, how much time and energy and unfailing effort did they sacrifice? Writing is hard work, he knew that, and he knew too that writers who have an easy time when they first start, always fade away after a short period of fame, while those who spend years of work and labor will come into fame which is lasting and permanent.

For a long time he got the impression that writing was an easy thing, but after a long hard study, of deep concentration, he knew that it was not true. A writer who gets anywhere in less than five years of hard work, is considered a miracle.

All these years of almost continuous writing, he had worked ~~alone~~ alone, depending always on his own judgment, making his own decisions, and there was no one to help him. No one had



ever criticized his work, and there was no way in which he could know what was wrong with his work. At first when he was told how excellent his work was, he became thrilled, then pleased, and he had a strong confidence in himself that perhaps after all he could write. He rushed into writing, with no care of thought to what he wrote. A flood of ideas came swirling around him, and as quickly as it came, he captured it into paper. Then months passed by, and suddenly, no longer confident of himself, he found that all enthusiasm had left him, all hope, all faith gone. He was no longer interested in it anymore. He suffered a complete let down, no longer having any desire to write again.

He knew, after careful consideration, that ceaseless writing would never get him anywhere, and he made up his mind then to understand the intricate process of learning all fundamental steps in reaching his goal. At this time he found to his amazement how little he knew, and he began to read thick volumes of books on technique, style, plot construction, theme, and the more he read, the more he became dazed at the complication of everything, but there was one clear point he understood, and it was this: People either write stories or they write literature. People who write stories do it for one purpose, and for one purpose alone, and that is for money. People who write literature write primarily to satisfy their desire for an outlet, and money is only secondary, or of no importance whatsoever. Now he said to himself, "What am I? A writer of stories, or a writer of



literature?" At this point, he did not know definitely yet, but this he did know, and that is, if he could not accomplish what he set out to do, if he could not find any satisfaction in his work, he did not want to go on. Unless he could prove beyond any doubt that he could write, he found no reason to continue on indefinitely.

Now after two years of almost continuous writing, he still found it impossible to have any confidence either in himself or in his work. He had rushed into writing without any preparation whatsoever, and many times he regretted that he did not study writing while he was at school. He had a great desire to start from the bottom up, to learn all fundamentals about writing. He wanted to write like other writers, taking a chance, doing something, struggling forward, and if in the end nothing comes of it, he could say, "At least I have tried. At least I have done something." What he could not stand is to remain static, doing nothing to further himself along.

He had an easy time getting started. Everything he wrote whether good or bad was taken in, and there was no way in which he could know whether it was of value or not. He got his regular money every month, but all this gave him no satisfaction. What he wanted was something more, the thrill of doing something fine, the glory of accomplishment. The way he had been going along was too easy, and there was no way for personal advancement."

He said, "Suppose I were to go like this, two, five, ten years, what good would it be to me? Would it not do me



more harm than good?" He was one who could not remain satisfied with one thing, for always he tried for something better. He knew that was the only way to advance himself. He knew that if must reach his goal, he must be willing to work hard. He knew there was no other way.

"This money I have received all these years will one day come back as a boomerang," he said. "It has made me lazy, and I did not strive hard enough to get ahead. If I had received no money all this time, I would naturally be terribly disappointed, but every disappointment is a step forward, and I will try still more in reaching my goal. Instead I have just sat back, lazily waiting for something. This is not the way I want to do things."

Yet despite all this, he had kept on, with a hope that perhaps there was a place for him somewhere, but the one thing he knew, and that is, he must not take things too easy and expect results. He must be willing to work and slave like others, and perhaps when the times comes, he will be rewarded for his efforts.

There is so much about writing which he wanted to know, but did not know. The only way he could ever believe in himself is to accomplish a triumph proving beyond any doubt that he could write. Otherwise, no matter what he hears, no matter how much people praise his stuff, he could not have the enthusiasm or confidence which he must have before he can write the way he knows he is capable of.

Very soon he knew that he must rid himself of everything



in the past and start anew, to begin again at the very bottom and work himself up. He had a great fear all along that the continuation of the method which had been accustomed to would in the end be of very little help.

For a long time he wanted constructive criticism of his work, and but ~~#p#~~ <sup>none</sup> came, and he said, "How can I go on like this? I must know my faults so that I can correct them, otherwise I shall always be unconscious of them, and then there will be no way in which I can improve myself."

He knew that he liked to write literature, who doesn't, but what good would it do when nobody reads it, when nobody wants it? Is it not better to write trash and get paid for it, than to write stories than nobody wants? "After all," he said, "I am not writing for the sake of posterity. I don't want to be famous after I am laid to rest under six feet of dirt. I want to live for the moment, this moment."

He was willing to work hard, but he must work in his own way, plan his own decisions, and if after all he fails, he could say, "At least I have tried, and I failed." He could not stand waiting long years in accomplishing what he wished, for he was one quick in doing, quick in decisions, quick in knowing. He really possessed great determination, and this great determination was mistaken many times for stubbornness. Because he was always on the side of the aggressive rather than on the side of the defensive, he could not stand domination.

During these years of writing he had slowly made up his mind to one thing. Someday, he decided, he was going to spend



studying  
a long period of time in apprenticeship, ~~studying~~ people, mannerisms  
dialogue, and everything that a successful writer must know.

He had given himself two and a half years to write, and that period is almost over. If during this time there is no sign or hope that he can succeed, then he is really going to give up writing completely and definitely and devote his time to the study of writing. After five years of study, <sup>from</sup> he is sure that he will ~~know~~ enough to get going and get results. Right now, despite all hope and faith, he knows that it is useless to expect too much, useless to go on with a false confidence of himself.

This he knew to be true, that it was useless for him to write when he had no preparation for it. He really wanted to become a known writer, or not be one at all.

"I must not expect too much at the beginning," he kept reminding himself, "I must not expect a miracle to happen, but I must go about this in the right way, otherwise I shall never get anywhere at all." And these two years he had kept on, striving for a <sup>not</sup> ~~ghal~~, ~~knowing~~ knowing, but so hopeful that the future might have something for him.

At the beginning of his writing career, he possessed a sudden fascination, a great deal of enthusiasm, and he wrote continuously, never caring about the poorness or excellence of his material. All he did was to write, page after page, never struggling for effect or mood or style. Then as time went on he realized that this careless method is not good for him. It is at this time that he realized how little he knew. All desire



for writing left him. Many times he wished to give up writing completely, to go away, to do nothing. During this period of disappointment, he had no desire, no hope, and he could not write.

But always in the back of his mind was the idea that perhaps there was a rich reward waiting for him, and fired by this far away dream, he rushed back into writing again, but the enthusiasm is not there. He wrote because he had to hand something in on time, not because his heart is in the work. He worked because he had to, to get money, not because he is interested in the personal ~~practical~~<sup>artistic</sup> accomplishment of his labor.

The truth is that writing is no longer a pleasure to him, but a dreary routine of long dull hours at the typewriter, staring into blank pages, his heart far away, longing for something else, what, he did not know. As a result he became lazy, dull, and he was no longer interested in his work. More and more critical he became with his work, and the more he analyzed his work, the more disappointed he became. When he realized that he could not write the way he wanted to, his mind became sluggish and sick with disappointment. He wanted to do something with a future, something he could depend on, and writing at his point was still an empty dream. Many times he wondered whether he had made a mistake in writing at such an early age, unprepared, unknown. If only he had known a little about writing before he started, <sup>would</sup> he would not feel so bad.



He could stand a great deal of criticism no matter how much it hurt. He was not one who ever kidded himself about ~~about~~ his excellence, for he knew how far he is from the goal he set himself to accomplish. Sometimes he said, "This cannot be a waste of time. I have worked so long at it, and I cannot fail."

But as he continued to write on, he had a faint suspicion that he did not go about it in the right way, and because he knew it, he felt miserable, and he made up his mind, "Someday, perhaps five years from now, I might know enough about writing to go on." Meanwhile, he kept on with his work, without much hope, without much confidence. And he said to himself many times, "Why did I take up writing in the first place. Someday I am going to suffer a nervous breakdown worrying about all this." What a life, what a life!

10

He sat there, lonely and lost in the blank page, the words and phrases in a confused pattern in his whirling mind, the image of a girl, a boy, the mechanical formula, yes, boy meets girl, girl meets boy, the complication, conflict, then extrication of the obstacle, then kisses against the setting sun, the hero saying, I love you, I love you, I do. And the heroine, her arms wrapped around the hero, her eyes aglittered with love, with love, ah, such is love, and the story again and again, for Colliers's, for Saturday Evening Post, for Liberty, for Redbook, Cosmopolitan, and on and on.

The blank walls, pictures of Bing Crosby, Fredric March, there's an actor for you, he's well in the Dark Angel, but rotten in Anna Karenina, but he sure is handsome, believe me. The whirling confusion of the mind, idea here and idea there, but nowhere, going, appearing again and again.

The past days, days of struggle and battling against odds, writing, day in and day out, but for what? why? so hopeless, getting nowhere, arriving no place. Two years now he had been at it, so confident, believing perhaps someday, somewhere the miracle will strike, then fame, fortune, name in print, but still obscure, unknow, lost, lost, yes, still not knowing, discouraged.

He thought, his mind in a state of complete confusion, If only something would happen, anything, anything, mind you, instead of all this <sup>these</sup> promises, false promises, if only something would happen. Often in his lonely days, his hopes so full and confident, someday it will happen, I know, someday.

And as the days marched by, like a dream from far away, his confidence melted away in the maze of words he wrote.



The feeling to get away from it all, to give the whole damn thing the gate, to forget, to forget completely, gripped him now and then. During these moments, his mind troubled and worried, he felt a new freedom. Hell with it all. No use going on like this. What the hell of writing like a stooge. Go out and forget. He would go out and forget, going to Neptune Beach, the salt air and wind filling his lungs, the wind took on a new freshness, so fresh and young. The army of printed words took on a Waterloo, defeated utterly, ah.

Twice he took the ferry to Frisco, feeding peanuts to the seagulls, catching pictures of the new bridge with the fifteen dollar camera, drinking root beer on the boat. Those were the days, really the days when he really felt like living.

He knew he could write on and on and on, forever, and ever, and still in the end would land up nowhere, just where he started. Writing is a racket, he knew, and must be treated as a racket, with racketeers grapping, grapping. Tricks, tricks, learn them all. Be smarter than the other fella, outwit him, outthink him, yes. That's the only way, fella, get going.

He used to take lonely walks along the street of the town, watching the people, feeling the atmosphere, thinking, Maybe someday it will come in handy. Never know, a story might pop up here and there, at the most queer moments.

Writing, writing, this and that, trash, some awful, some good, and perhaps some really good, but who is he to judge? Let the public decide, the dear public will decide, but give them a chance.

Waiting, waiting, won't get him anywhere at all, he knew.

СОПОТЫЧИЕ СОВЕТСКОГО ПОДДОБЬЯ

No one ever had gotten ~~anyway~~ anywhere just by waiting. Make something happen, anything, it doesn't matter at all.

He had heard many things, criticism, just intelligent, some just lies, lies, he can see through it all, there was no use trying to say anymore.

The image of a contract loomed in his mind, like a faded dream, unreal, but so obtainable, if only he knew how to get it. Royalties, contract, copyright, all these he knew and understand to the smallest detail. He knew all the tricks, now is the time to put them to use, instead of waiting, waiting. Get going, fella, if you want to get somewhere. If you want result, do it yourself. Don't depend too much on people, do it yourself. That's the only way to get somewhere.

He knew inside of him definitely that he could get results, but not by waiting, he knew. Beat the other fella to it, he knew, and get going, now! Now is the time, the time.

He grapped hold of every single magazine he could get his hands on, from the <sup>Frontier and Midland</sup> ~~Frontier and Midland~~, a magazine that <sup>pay</sup> ~~pays~~ nothing, to Cosmopolitan, a magazine that pays large sum of money. The Literary America, The Magazine, The Yale Review, and on and on. He knew the address of every single magazine in the United States and England. Isn't there one who would take his stuff? It couldn't be as bad as all that, could it? If it is, then why write at all? Why? Why? he wondered. He's not such a fool, is he?

He could see through the false and artificial talk, and knew he must not wait any longer. Act now, now.



The agony of it all, the tragedy, the failure. It was enough to dishearten~~it~~ him completely. What's the use? What's the use, he often wondered.

He knew he must get some action, and get it quick. No use waiting anymore. Then it will be too late, too late.

Now. Get going, man.

His drawers filled with carbon manuscript<sup>were</sup>. He often took them out and read them. Once he was surprised at how well they read. Another time, he was so gloomed at how badly they seemed. Two drawers full he had. Perhaps someday, soon, he hoped, success.

But he knew now that waiting won't get him anywhere. He was positive of it, very positive of it all.

He always used his own judgment, never believing what other people said, knowing himself that he must do things himself if he wished to succeed. That is the only way one could succeed, and he knew it.

There was talk of this and that, how one day he would get somewhere, but it was all a dream, he knew it from the very beginning, and he knows it now. The thought lingered in his memory, precise and clear, like a clearcut cameo.

An idea surged through his mind all of a sudden, and he knew then and there. Get going, and don't wait any longer.

And believe me, he's going to get going too.

He's been a fool long enough.



First of all a writer is one who writes, no matter what it is, maybe a short <sup>story</sup>, perhaps a poem, then it might be rhymes, verses, plays. In fact a person who writes is a writer.

Now I have never considered myself as a writer. The only things that I have ever written are short stories and other unimportant things that I did in school. And I only got a B for ~~them~~ <sup>it</sup>. So when people tell me that I ought to write I began to be skeptical, for being a writer is not an easy thing.

I have read about the hardships that other writers had when they first started, and if I remember correctly, I think it was about Kathleen Norris. It seemed that Miss Norris had written a story, her very first, and on the advice of a friend, who later turned out to be her husband, she submitted it to a magazine, beginning with the A's and then on down to the Z's. Well, the story was rejected by exactly thirty-six magazines. But did Miss Norris give up? No, No, she did not. She stuck right on. And she sent the same story out again, this time beginning with the A's again. And sure enough it was taken by one of the magazines that previously had rejected it. During that time five or six months must have passed by. But it just goes to show that if a person sticks on, he must bound to ~~get~~ <sup>write</sup> success in the end.

But I don't know. I don't know whether I could ~~right~~ <sup>write</sup> or not. I have never taken a lesson in short story writing. During my school career no one had ever told me that I ought to write for a living. Writing was the very last thing I would ever have thought of at all.

I know I read a great deal, from dreary Russian novels to the light western stories about cowboys riding over the



Arizona deserts. I read because I wanted to read, because I have nothing to do, and I read everything from Photoplay to the American Mercury. I could enjoy a story in Collier's, even though it is just a lot of trash, or a modern story in Story Magazine.

I have often wondered how people write, if writers shut themselves from the outside world, and become hermits, tearing their hair out, trying to wring an idea out of their head.

I have often thought, it must be grand to be a writer, getting your name into a magazine, and receiving great sums of money, because you are writing trash. Just plain trash. Like Kathleen Norris, Like Frederick Hazzlitt Brennan, but they get paid for it, so why worry at all. They get big sum of money for doing that. And people read them too. And as Alexander Woollcott stated: The name of Kathleen Norris on the cover of a magazine would raise the circulation of that magazine to print a total of 100,000 copies more. So I don't blame editors for paying her such a big sum of money for her stories, her articles. After all, the editors had to sell their magazine, and they couldn't sell unless people buy, and people won't buy unless the magazines have stories they like. And if they like trash, then the editors have to give them trash. So there you are.

Let me begin again. I suppose to be writing a short story, and this is supposed to be a short story. Although what a short story should be I do not know. Someone had said, A story should have three parts, the beginning, the middle, the conclusion. But I guess I am just jumping around, paying no attention to the three rules. But I do not consider myself



a modern writer. In fact I do not consider myself a writer at all. I just had to get this off my chest, gosh darn it all. But to go back to my story.

I am supposing to be writing a short story, and this is it. ~~I~~ was because I had nothing to do that I wrote this, I have been writing fairy tales, true stories, until I was about just eating and sleeping fairy tales and true stories. So before I explode, I had to dash off this, this so called short story.

I don't know whether this is a short story or not. But what the hell. I am writing it, and that's that.

I have never been interested in writing, simply because I do not think I could write like Zane Grey, much as I like to, and I could not write like Pearl Buck, much as I like to. Gee, it must be good to another Zane Grey or another Pearl Buck. But I cannot, because I am not another Zane Grey or a Pearl Buck. In fact, I am just nothing, nothing at all.

Now when a person begins to be interested in writing, he would begin to learn a lot of things, lot of information that he picks up here and there. So I guess it was natural for me to read a book on how to write short stories. Let me see. Yes, I guess it was "Trial and Error." That was the book I read. And I don't mind telling you that I've learned a great deal about this writing game, all the tricks and ways of a writer trying to get into print. Many people have done it. So I guess it couldn't be hard for a new comer to crash into the writing game.

It seems there are three types of magazines. The pulps. The smooth paper, otherwise known as the slicks, and last,

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but not least, the quality or the literary.

The pulps include all the western, the confession, the sex, the cowboy and the detective stories. And this group of magazine usually pays one to two cents a word. So you, and you could make a good living by writing for these magazines. And if you read these magazines, you know you could do much better than the authors in it.

But why am I writing all this, I guess I can't help it. It just slip out like this, so I guess I just let myself wander on and on, what's the use of stopping.

But I say again, this is supposed to be a short story, but where the story is I really don't know. Perhaps it's between the lines.

Well, in the smooth paper group we have Collier's, Liberty. Saturday Evening Post, and a score of others.

This magazines pay high rates, and they use stories with the familiar formula, year after year, and this formula is this. A girl falls in love with a boy. Or the boy falls in love with the girl. They get into trouble. That's called the complication. The author put them through many troubles. Then he gets them out, and that's called the extrication. Then he writes the conclusion. This is the shell, and the author writes one story after another, using nothing but this same formula, and is he selling! And the money he makes!

And they are called authors. That's why I do not think I am an author, because I have never written anything like that, and because I don't think I could write anything like that at all. So you, you see that I am not an author.

But I am suppose to be writing a short story here, this



strings of words that I am typing out so fast.

That's why it doesn't make sense at all.

Then in the quality group we have Harper's, Atlantic Monthly, Story, the American Mercury. These group print the best stories, but they pay lousy, so I read. Although I do not know personally.

And a writer could write for these magazines, or the pulps, or the smooth paper. No author wants to be an unpublished writer. If they could have something in print, they could be so thrilled, it would give them confidence in themselves.

They would want to write, to write a great deal. Perhaps they would get into the money. After all, a person writes for money except a fool, and no one wants to be a fool. I hope I am not one.

A writer is a worker. And he should be paid for it, even though it might not be very good. After all, writing is a job, and writers work much harder than other people in various positions. So I think that a writer deserves everything he earns, even though it is not even worth paying for.

After all, writing is not a dependable job. A writer has his ups and downs, just like other people, like other workers.

The fact is I don't know whether I want to be a writer or not, it is so hard to tell. It is so easy to be discouraged. Thinking that you would want to write, only find out too late that you could not write at all, and should not have started to write in the first place. Then it is too late, so it is better not to start to write, than to find out too late that you have written-nothing.



So I'm not so sure that I want to write, and since I never do anything except when I am perfectly sure and definite, maybe I don't want to be a writer after all. And again maybe I want to. So I just guess I compromise, and be and be, oh, anything, any gosh darn thing at all. Why worry? Why worry?

I say again, this is supposed to be a short story, or is it? I don't know. You don't know. Oh, hell. Nobody knows. But anything that a person writes is a story whether it follows a formula or not. So then this is a story, a story about a story, or is there such a thing, but nevertheless I am saying it again.

What I try to say could be explained in the title. Maybe I don't want to be a writer after all. That's the idea of the whole thing. But why it has taken me so many pages to explain it is more than I can understand.

Mind you, I'm not saying that I do not want to write, no, far from that, very far from that, yet I did not say I wanted to write, far from that too. What I did say was maybe I don't want to be a writer. You see, there's a word there, maybe. And I guess it does make a lot of difference.

It must be nice to write like Thomas Wolfe, or like Nordhoff and Hall, or like James Joyce. Those are writers, yes, yes. So you see why I am so desperate. How could I ever hope to write one tenth or one hundred as well as they could. I most certainly could not.

Maybe I don't want to be a writer.

It must be most sad and disappointing to start on a writing career, and then have everything blow to the four winds. It is much better not to start at all, than to discover that you



cannot write.

So you see maybe I don't want to be a writer after all. I said maybe.

Now another thing about this writing racket. IN the language of the writer there is such a thing known as the narrative hook. That is to start the story out with a bit of conversation so as to catch the reader's interest. And be sure to put in a lot of dialogue in the story, the more the better, and the more dialogue you have, the more chance that the story would be sold.

So you see that right now, in ~~this~~ very story, I am doing the wrong thing. Here I am in the seventh page, and there isn't a bit of dialogue yet. So you see I am not a writer after all, and although I know all about the tricks of writing, I can't use them for the simple reason, I don't know them, and yet I think that I do.

Maybe I don't want to be a writer. Perhaps that's it. And maybe someday when I <sup>am</sup> really interested in writing, perhaps I would write a lot of trash, and perhaps even sell them. Wouldn't that be nice, don't you think?

Yes, this writing business is just a racket. All you have to do is to know all the tricks, and you would be able to get somewhere, and make a lot of money. It isn't hard.

A person could write "literature" and it could ~~be~~ the finest writing in the magazines, but he would not be popular, because the readers do not want to read literature.

So a writer writes trash and gets by with it! And gets paid for it too.



There is only one difference between an amateur and a professional. A professional writer slants his stuff, and he knows definitely where he is going to sell it. And an amateur does not know at all.

That's the difference between an amateur and a professional.

That is the only difference.

So you see I am only an amateur.

Maybe I don't want to be a writer after all.

Darn it all, why do I have to take so many words to explain what I mean. That proves definitely that I am not a writer. So you see. Or don't you?

I am going to learn all the tricks and ways of this writing game, not because I want to use them, but because it is good to know them in advance, for a writer would eventually learn it anyway. So I'm learning them in advance, so I know something about this writing game.

If you don't, there are people who would take advantage of you, and you can be sure that there are plenty of such people. A writer has always got to be on the lookout for such people.

Well, maybe after all I just be myself, and not be a writer at all.

This is my story, and this is the way I write. This is poor English, and poor writing, but hell, I'm telling what I think, and if you don't want to read it, that's your business.

My story is ended now, and if you can see any sense in it, you are a better man than I am.

The hell with it all. Maybe I don't want to be a writer. I ought to say just that, and then that's my story, and I don't have to write so many words.



"All right, students, let us now review all the grammar that we have studied in the past week. Be sure to pay strict attention to all that I shall say, as I <sup>shall</sup> ~~will~~ call on one of you to recite after I have finished.

"Now, the first thing that we shall go over is the subject and the predicate. All of you have learned that the subject is the word about which something is said. You know, too, that the predicate is the word that does the telling. A subject that tells about a single person or thing is called a singular subject, or bare subject. The bare subject and all its modifiers is called the complete predicate. If the subject of a sentence is singular in meaning, then the predicate must also be singular.

"Remember that there is no such word as ain't. Avoid using it by all means.

"A pronoun is a word used in place of a noun. There are masculine and feminine pronouns, and also the neuter gender. The antecedent of a pronoun must agree with the pronoun in number, person, and gender. Remember that the second person pronoun, no matter whether it is singular or plural, is always followed by the plural form of the predicate. The worse mistakes you can make is to say, you is, you was, or you has.

"Never say don't with the third person singular. Instead say doesn't. Sentences such as, 'He do not do it,' is wrong. You should say, 'He does not do it.'

"There are no such words as bust, bursted, shutted, or hurtted. Words like one, anyone, neither, everybody, are singular in meaning, so they take a singular verb. When the subject consists of two or more words joined by and, then a plural verb



is required. Collective nouns take a singular verb form. If, however, you are thinking of separate persons that make up the whole, use the plural form of the verb.

"I want you to know something about the word, number. When the word, number, is preceded by the word, the, then use the singular form verb. But if the word, number, is preceded by the word, a, then use the plural form of the verb. Examples: The number of students in the class is seventy-five. A number of students are going to the cinema.

"It is very bad grammar to say, it's me or it is him. The correct way is to say, it's I, it is he, or it is she. Remember that the word, but, is a preposition when it means except. In that case you should use the objective case of the pronoun. Examples: Everybody is there but him. It is wrong to say, 'Everybody is there but he.'

"And listen students. It is very bad grammar to say, I seen or I done. When you are comparing things and are using the word, than, you just add the word, other, in the comparison. Examples: He is smarter than any other boy in the class. Wrong: He is smarter than any boy in the class. Remember that the word, than, is always followed by a certain part of speech. If it happens to be a pronoun, the pronoun is always in the nominative case. Right: He is taller than I. Wrong: He is taller than me. Now do you understand?

"Remember this, too. Always use the word, a, in front of words beginning with a sounded h. Examples: a historian; a house. But with a silent h, we used an. An hour; an heir.

"This is very important, students. Never say, 'He is not



as tall as I.' Instead say, 'He is not so tall as I.' Remember this, students. This is very important. The word, like, is often incorrectly used. Example: She acts like she is very smart. Right: She acts as if she is very smart.

"The word whom and whom is often incorrectly used. It is a common mistake to write who when whom should be the right word.

"To express a condition contrary to fact use the form were to follow all three persons. Right: If I were he; if you were I; if he were you. Never use had and ought together. Wrong: He hadn't ought to do it. Right: He ought not to do it.

"Well, I guess this much is enough for today. Tomorrow we will discuss about commas, and periods. All right, Peter, you may tell the class what you have learned today."

"Aw gee, teacher, it ain't right for you to call on I everytime. Yesterday I forgotten to study my lesson. You act like you want to call on I everytime. It ain't fair.

"I has no more time to study anymore. It ain't that I doesn't want to study, but I has no time. My mother she work all the time and I has to do my work by meself. My father he just bum around and he have not nothing to do. Once I asks him to help I and he say, 'Who does you think you is?' Then he say, 'I ain't has no more time for those things. Go ask you teacher to learn you.'

"Gee, I guess he don't want to learn<sup>9</sup>. I knows a number of students who has mothers and fathers to help him. But I ain't got none. Everybody are learning grammar but I. I wants to learn teacher, but I ain't has no time to do them.

"Everyday I has to sell papers and I seen many boys who is



worser off than me. Sometime I has to stay out in the cold for a hour and then returns to an house which have no fire. Gee, I can't study when I am cold. Sometime I goes out in the streets and plays. I knows I hadn't ought to do it, but I can't study. And everytime you call on I."

"Why, Peter, Peter! Your grammar is awful!"

"Aw, Nerts!"



XLIX

Mary, my darling.

Yesterday I was electrocuted. And now I have to explain everything to you. You suffered for so long. You did not understand what it was all about. In the moments of despair, of anguish, and undescribable suffering, I felt like a lonely soul, alone and apart from the earth. Mary, I must explain and you will understand. Forgive me if I fail you. But I love you so. Perhaps it is this undying love that had caused all this trouble. Mary, I know you will understand.

How is little Bobby? Don't let him know what had happened to me. I beg of you. And the two day old child, how is he? The hour before they took me into that little room, dark and solemn, I received your telegram. You said that you were going to pray for me. Oh, Mary, I am so thankful for you. In my last hour I knew that someone still loved me. Then they led me to the little room and sudden death came quickly over me.

Mary, my darling. Listen. And don't judge me too hard when I finish. Remember that I love you and that I always shall.

I must explain everything, therefore, I will start from the beginning. Oh, Mary, it hurts my heart to tell you this. But I must. So listen, Mary.

Thirty years ago, my father made the acquaintance of a young lady. He was only twenty then. The girl was nineteen. He fell in love with her. He was so desperately in love with Susan—that was the name of my mother, that he decided that he cannot live without her any longer. Yet he could not marry her because of his health. He did not let Susan know about it.



His father died when ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> little son was but two years old. The father was an epileptic person. So when he married, his son was born afflicted with this disease. So my father was born an epileptic <sup>tiny</sup> ~~person~~. In his childhood he suffered from fainting spells. And when he fainted, there were foams in his mouth, white and soapy, which threw his mother into hysterics.

My grandfather before he married my grandmother told her that he was afflicted with this curse. But grandmother loved him dearly and she married him despite frantic objections. Two years after their marriage, my father was born. And he was a big and strong baby.

He grew up in the little neighborhood. When he was two years old, his father died. The father suffered one of his fainting spells which he never came out of. Poor father ~~does~~ <sup>did</sup> not know that someday he, too, will die in just the same way as his father had died. When my father was of age to ask questions, he asked mother why he suffered from weakness and fainting. But his mother did not want to tell, and he told him that it will stop as soon as he grows ~~up~~ and becomes a big man.

The years went by, and soon father was a young boy of fifteen. In school, which was in the little town, was far from the house. He used to walk there in the early morning. Many times he had fainted while walking to school. But fortunately he was always saved and he recovered from these shocks. He was not strong.

He did not play and participate in athletics and games. Often in the middle of the lesson he would faint and throw the whole room and the teacher into fears. Once a week he would suffer. And soon it was a weekly occurrence that everyone expected.



Here at school he was treated very kindly by the teacher and the different students. They knew how delicate and weak he was and no one ever fought or quarrelled with him. They treated him very friendly and he was a young man <sup>whom</sup> ~~that~~ they trusted and respected.

He grew up very fast and soon he was nineteen years of age. At this time his mother told him not to ever get married. She told him that a person in the condition he was in, was not fitted <sup>knew</sup> to be wedded. The young man <sup>it</sup> was all true. And he promised his mother that under no circumstance would he ever tie himself together with a wife.

It was at this time that he met Susan. And he immediately fell in love with her, and she with him. Much as he liked to not think of her, yet it was not successful. He grew fonder of her the more he did not see her. He felt miserable all over. Do you understand this, Mary? I felt the same way toward you too.

Now grandmother found out about this affair and she did her best to stop it. But she might just as well have spent her time in pleasure as the more she tried to draw them apart, the more the lovers were drawn closer. Secret meetings took place right under the very nose of grandmother's house.

Father took frequent trips to the country with Susan. They would lie in the soft grass and gazed over the countryside. And they picked wild flowers. And they picnicked together. Yes, father was happy then.

Thus it developed that nature drew them together too soon. It was here that flesh met flesh and soon Susan was with child. Stricken with panic she begged father to married her. Father had nothing else to do but <sup>to marry</sup> married her.



From that time on, grandmother had not spoken to Susan or to father.

It was after Susan had married father that she found out that he was stricken with epilepsy. She was filled with a horror but she dared not leave him because she was going to give birth to a child soon.

On a cold winter night <sup>when</sup> the snow fell in flakes on the lonely road, I was born at home. Mother died. And father hated me because he blamed her death on me. But I was not to be blamed.

Mary, my darling. I blamed him that I was ever born. You will not be suffering now if I had remain in darkness and never saw the light of day. Poor Mary, and my little son, Bobby. But I must continue with my story.

When mother died I was left alone with father. He disliked me and he did not wish to take care of me. Now it happened that there was an old woman who longed for a child very much. She had a son who was lost <sup>at sea</sup> ~~in the war~~. Seeing how helpless my father was and how I ought to be cared for, she decided to take care of me.

At that time father was like a fool. Since the death of my mother, he had not been the same. He was moody and sullen. Father did not want to let me go. Finally the old woman offered five hundred dollars cash and my father let me go over to the old woman. Father was badly in need of money then. He took the money, and my life with the old woman began. I was less than twelve months old at that time.

Do you know how I happen to know all this, Mary? It was told to me by the old <sup>lady</sup> ~~boy~~ when she passed away. She was kind to me, and I shall always remember her as a kind soul forever.



It was not long after my father had given me over to the old lady that he died. He had one of his spells and before anyone could save him, he passed away just like the way my grandfather passed away. I was a lonely orphan, friendless, except for the care that the old lady showered upon me. I called her Granny.

As far as I can recall, I remember suffering from my first spell when I was quite a small boy. When I was small, I used to cry very often. When I cried too hard, then I would faint. My face would become black and I lost my voice. I would writhe and suffer tortures and violence. Then I would remain motionless for three or four minutes. During those minutes I ~~were~~<sup>were</sup> like a dead person. I could not breathe and move. My face retained that black color. Then little by little the color would change and then I would continue with my crying.

Granny told me that the first time that that happened to me she was afraid I was dead. She called the doctor and when he came, I had recovered from my fit and was lustily crying again. He examined me and said that nothing was the matter with me at all. Then Granny told him about my father. And he said that my troubles were cause by heredity. He told Granny that outside of my fits, I was a perfect physical little boy.

Mary, if I only were. Now I would be at your side, loving and caressing you. Mary, how could I ever forgive myself for causing you all this trouble?

Fortunately for me I did not suffer as much as father did when he was a boy. Probably I was a stronger boy. However, If I cried too much, then I suffered from those fainting spells. It just came so suddenly that I could not help it. It seized me and

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before I knew it, darkness came over me.

In those torturous moments sparks, red and blue, glared in my eyes. Ringing, like those of an electric bell, thundered in my ears, then faded away and then thundered again. It was like a dream to me, a dream which I can never hope to forget. Those few minutes were like a long, long century.

Mary, my darling. I never told you about this before. I could not. It would have ~~soil~~ everything. Our happiness and home. I was madly in love with you and I cannot bear to be without you. Now I know. If I had told you all this before, perhaps today you would not be a widow with two little children, epileptic and weak. I am so sorry for Bobby and the little baby. I only hope that they will grow up and become good strong men. Mary, you must listen to me. I am not through yet.

As I said before these moments were like a long century, tedious and slow. But when I recovered from my spell, I was like a new man, strong and husky. Yes, it was very strange. And odd too. I found out as I grew older than if I did not cry too much those spells did not come to me. At first I was surprised that it was possible. I thought that the spells would come at regular intervals, but I found out that it was not true. When I grew older, I ~~tried~~ not to cry too much. As a result, I did not suffer from faints so very much.

Then the years went by. I took care of myself. I tried to make myself as strong as possible. I watched after my diet. I did not want anyone to know that I am an epileptic person. From the time I was ten till I was sixteen, I did not suffer one single fainting spell. I thought I was all well. I was wrong.



Granny was getting old. As the years passed, one into another, old age descended upon her. Her face became wrinkled, like the sagging skin of an old apple. Her shoulders became bent and she walked in stooping steps. One night when the rain fell heavily and the chill winter winds blew with raging coldness, Granny succumbed to a cold. Then it developed rapidly into its serious stages.

She coughed. And in the morning when I took her medicine up to her, I could hear that hollow, suffering, cough of hers. It was terrible.

Granny was almost sixty years of age then. She herself knew that she would not last very long. The doctor told her not to worry and that she would get well soon. But instinct in the old woman told her that it was not so. One day she said to me, "Fred, I am getting old. There is something that I must let you know. I don't want to speak of it. But I must now. I am dying, Fred. I know. And I want you to listen to what I am going to tell you." Then she related the history about my father, my grandfather to me.

Mary, I remembered that I cried then. I knew what a scoundrel father was. But I was one too, Mary. I should never have married you.

I cried at Granny's bedside. She touched my hair lightly and told me to stop crying. She said to me, "Freddie, remember yourself. Don't cry too much." But before she finished, I fainted. It was a long time from my childhood to that minute that I fainted.

Seeing what had happened to me, Granny was shocked and she died. When I recovered I saw Granny moaning and murmuring on the bed. She stared at me with glassy eyes and I knew that death was near. But she said softly, "Don't ever get married. Don't."



Then she turned and died.

Yes, Mary, she died just like that. But I did not pay any attention to what she said to me. I married you, Mary. And I am causing you suffering and despair. Poor Mary. Now you must have hated me for doing what I did.

After Granny's death, life was empty and barren. Her death stripped me of friendship, love, and devotion. And I was left alone. She left me some money and I was able to take care of myself until I found work to do.

My education was not complete because I had to take care of myself. In the days that I ought to be studying and learning, I worked. Luckily for me, I only had myself to take care of. Otherwise I would not have managed at all. I saved my money, and I decided that someday I would spend it and enjoy myself. I want<sup>to</sup> forget that I <sup>was</sup> an epileptic young man. I wish<sup>to</sup> see the world and know the meaning of the word, fun, before I pass to the land beyond. My heartaches, my sufferings, and utter hopelessness still remain in my mind. Oh, the futile existence of my childhood!

Then the days became weeks, and the weeks became months. Then months became years. I was twenty-one. Then I met you, Mary. Do you remember that day? I can see it just as clearly as though it was yesterday. I fell in love with you instantly.

You must have thought a great deal about me. I remember your devotion and your love. You must have believed everything that I told you. Mary darling, I was greatly in love with you then. Very much, so much that I do not know what would happen to me if I did not <sup>meet</sup> you. Do you remember the happy days we used to have, the fun, and the joys? It is so different now, Mary, isn't it?



Those days will never come again. And I am lonely.

We were happy then, were we not, Mary? I remember when Bobby was born how happy you <sup>were</sup> were. There ~~was~~ light and happiness in your eyes, and laughter too. We were one big happy family. Who could fortell that tragedy was lurking in the shadows and was ready to strike. And to strike with such a blow that our dreams, desires, and hopes would be completely shattered. Shattered in splinters and fragments beyond repair. Mary darling, my poor heart is crying. Crying.

We had three years of happy married life together. And then sadness came. I should have told you, but I did not. You were with child then, Mary. And I did not want you to suffer too much. But it happened like this and now I have to get it off my chest. My conscience had been bothering me for so long that I could not stand it any longer. You know, Mary darling, the reason why I did not want to tell you this before was because of your condition. It would have been a terrible blow to you if you had known then.

I never told you that I was an epileptic. Beside, I found no need of it to inform you, since I did not suffer from attacks when I grew up. But that night something happened. The fires of the disease were smothering in me and on that night it flared and ran wild inside of me and there was no need and means of extinguishing ~~them~~ it.

I remember that night extremely well. Who could forget it.

I remember the bright thunder that rumbled and thundered throughout the night. I was asleep, but something inside of me told me that something was wrong. I woke up with a start. I looked around and somehow I knew something was wrong somewhere.



That strange, odd, peculiar feeling of being lost, being sick, came over me that for a moment I ~~was~~ like a lost soul, lost in the darkness, the obscurity of the deep night. I heard your breathing, so regular and even near me, Mary. Then, because of unexplicable fears inside of me, I felt myself all over. I pinched myself to make sure that I ~~was~~ not dreaming and that I <sup>was</sup> fully awake.

Out of the night the ringing, that familiar ringing thundered into my ears. It rang, it sang, it whistled until I had a feeling that my ears would break. With the speed and quickness of a tornado it died down, and I heard your breathing again, Mary. Outside it was raining in torrents and the waters gushed and splashed in the puddles. The lighting flared and shone with flashing speed, then lost itself in the shadows of the dark night.

It seemed to be a night for spirits to venture out. A night when the supernatural dominated the scene. It was the night when the fires of epilepsy leapt and jumped inside of me. I felt weak and cold. I would have waken you up except that I was afraid you would wonder and try to find out what was the matter with me. I got quickly out of bed and put on my robe. I had a fainting feeling inside of me. I went and sat on the small stool, you know that one, Mary, the one which you covered with the red-woolen cloth. I sat down there and I put my head on my shoulders. I said to myself, "I must tell Mary about myself sometime. This could not go on forever. She would find out someday anyway." How long I sat there I don't remember. But it was in the early dawn of a cold morning that I woke up. I hurried back to bed. I slept for one or two hours and then you woke me up. Remember, Mary? Well, I was going to tell you everything except that I was feeling so fine that I thought perhaps some other day would do just as well.

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I never told you about that night. A long time after that I did not suffer from those strange feelings, and I did not think it necessary to tell you about them. Well, the days went by and soon I found out I was to be a father again. Mary, you were happy too. I remember what you said to me, You said, "Fred, I hope it will be a girl this time. All my life I love to have a girl." And I said, "If the next child turns out to be of the male sex, we will keep <sup>on</sup> having children until we get a girl."

You know, I was rather surprised at Bobby. He was born such a strong and lusty baby that no one would have ever guessed that his father was an epileptic man. The surprising part of the thing was the fact that he was a strong baby, and he never suffered from epileptic attacks. I was glad because of that. Because of that you would never know about me.

Your time to have the baby was coming very quickly. You were going to the hospital in a few weeks. And I hired a young nurse to take care of Bobby while you were away.

Bobby was born at home and I remember how ~~I~~ afraid <sup>I</sup> was of you. And I said that the next time that you have a baby, I would send you to the hospital weeks ahead of time.

You went to the hospital and the beautiful nurse who was to take care of Bobby arrived. She was really young and beautiful. Bobby and she became the greatest of friends. I was glad for I was afraid that perhaps Bobby might miss you while you were staying at the hospital.

I was lonely, Mary. I missed you. After the long hours of hard work at the studio, I came back and found not a soul ~~to~~ to welcome me home. I was lonely and I wanted friendship.



The nurse had eyes that looked like diamonds against a dark, velvet background. They shone, they glistened, and they twinkled. The magnetic fires pulled my gaze toward her. I saw her lashes fluttered now and then, and the silent gazing of hers. Oh, Mary, if you could only understand. She was very kind to Bobby.

I did not try to make love to her. But in my moments of leisure I visioned those magnetic eyes drawing me toward her. I saw those long dark lashes flashing up and down. I saw those dark brows. Oh, Mary, I fell in love. Yes, I could not help it. I thought of you and the future child. But at that time the smothering fires of epilepsy ran and leapt in <sup>my</sup> body. I was not myself. I was a soul, lost, and apart.

The nights were nightmares to me. I had strange feelings and my heart throbbed and palpitated with haste and the hot blood gushed and ran like a wild forest fire. I had a desire to grab her. And kill her. I could not explain. Once I woke up in the night and my hands trembled and shook. I could not control myself. I crept silently out into the hall way. The lights were all turned off, and not a sound could be heard in the quiet household. In my barefeet I crept silently toward her room. I opened the door with a key that I possessed. I turned the handle and I saw her white throat glistened in the moonlight. I plunged forward and grabbed her and I choked her. A few minutes later I released my hold. She was dead. Her face was blue and black. I went back to my room and slept.

Morning dawned.

Bobby woke up and he came screaming into the room.

"Clara is dead. Father, Clara is dead." He sobbed.



I woke up. My head throbbed and my pulse jumped. I glared at Bobby. I saw that throat white and smooth. With an almost hypnotic stare I gazed within the depths of his light-blue eyes. My desire to strangle him became acute. He must have known what was in my mind as he edged away. Little by little he edged away.

Suddenly I felt strange again. My desire to kill melted away. I was normal again. My heart did not palpitate. My hot blood slowed down. My hypnotic gaze faded, then died.

~~my~~ <sup>now</sup> this is the way it always happens. It comes and it goes quick as lightning.

I said to Bobby, "What is the matter? Is something wrong?"

Slowly he lost his fears and he approached me. "The nurse is dead. She's dead." At that he broke in violent sobs and he cried and moaned. He put his head in his hands and then he put them down on the table. He shook.

But he controlled himself in a few minutes, then he dried his tears and looked at me with silent gaze.

I looked back at him as I did not know what to do. I vaguely remember grabbing hold of someone's throat during the night. I remember waking up and hearing the rumbling of the electrifying thunder. I remember creeping silently over the house.

Now when Bobby said that Clara was dead I grew afraid. I did not want the police to find out.

I sent Bobby out of the room. I told him that I will take care of the body. He went out and I sat in the room not knowing what to do. I sat and sat for quite a time. How long I did not remember. The clocks ticked and ticked and I sat in the room. The hours passed and the clocks continued to tick. I was lost.



I ~~do~~ <sup>did</sup> not remember how long I sat. The next thing I knew was that there was a heavy pounding at the door. I started. Fearfully I went up to open the door and slowly and cautiously peered outside. There was Bobby with three policemen standing on the steps and waiting to get in to the house. Oh, Mary, I did not know what to do. In those few seconds I was planning an alibi as to how I could make the police believe that I did not do it.

I controlled myself, and I hastily opened the door to let the police in.

One of them addressed me and said in a rough voice, "I understand that there was a person killed here last night. Where is the dead body?" Before I could answer the police all went upstairs.

They went into the nurse's room and there on the bed was the corpse, lying exactly as I left it. The police said, "Why, she's murdered!" Then turning around and facing me, he said, "Do you know anything about this? I answered with a tremulous quiver in my voice that I did not know anything. I shook a little. The police evidently knew something about it. "Why are you so nervous?" he addressed me. "Why did you not call the police sooner?"

He stared at me with a strange look. If I am right it was more of a suspicious look, intent and searching. I grew afraid all of a sudden.

Then Mary, you know what happened? That strange feeling came over me again. The hot blood pounded in my ears. My head turned. My eyes shot invisible fires. I confessed. I did not know what I was talking about. It was only after coming out of my trance that the police told me that I had confessed.

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When I found out what I had done I told him that I was insane, that I suffered from epilepsy. But he would not believe me. He said I was lying.

I said, "I really did not mean to kill her. It was during one of my moments of attack that I felt that strange feeling. You must believe me. I beg of you, you must believe me. Why should I want to kill her?" He looked at me and said, "Tell it to the judge."

Then they took me down to headquarters where they showered question upon question upon me. Shaking with fright, and trembling with fear, I answered them. How many blunders I made I did not know. But it was all like a dream to me. I remember the sweat dripping down my forehead, then trickled down into my throat. I remember faces leering at me, shouting at me, hands pushing me, slapping me. It was a torturous third degree, one which I shall always remember for the rest of my life. And that life <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ not very long, was it, Mary?

I saw hands pointing at me saying, "Guilty. Guilty." I saw the black and blue face of Clara.

To try to save myself I said, "I am insane! I am mad! I killed her because of uncontrollable impulses! You cannot convict me! I am Mad! Mad!"

But they paid not the least bit of attention to me. However, they did send a doctor in to examine me and he said that I was very normal.

Then and there I wished I could have one of my spells and prove to them that I suffered from epilepsy. But no spell came. I was lost. Lost. Never to be found again.



Then the events happened one after another. I remember sitting in the courtroom. I remember the prosecutor shouting at me. Most of all, I remember that sentence. "We, the jury, find the defendant guilty of murder in the first degree." "Ary, a. heart sank when I heard that. Then the sentence and I was led away and then to prison.

Mary. What more can I say. I was found guilty and there was no way out of it. I found out that I was to be electrocuted in two weeks. What more can I do but spend those long, weary days in the barren dungeon.

How well I remember those days. Days which I shall never hope to forget. Days which will linger forever and forever in my mind.

Those grey walls of the dungeon, silent and challenging. They seemed to laugh and sneer at me. The long iron bars of the gates. Strong and unbreakable. Walking back and forth on the stone floor, sitting down smoking one smoke after another, lying in bed thinking, worrying. And the days long, long, never ending.

Day after day, the same monotonous scenes, the same people, the same places. Oh, Mary, I could not stand it. Many times I had the notion to throw myself against the hard rocks of the walls. But I never carried it through. I <sup>did</sup> not know why. I was a coward.

I knew nothing more of the world outside. I was apart from it. A lost soul about to die. I was in another world, dreary and sad.

The days passed slowly and mechanically through. I waited and waited but death was coming close, and I was ready. My heart cried, Mary, it cried.



The day for my electrocution arrived. I was not afraid. But as the day wore on and the hour drew near, I lost my courage; I was afraid. The scene of the murder, the white throat, the men in the jury, and a panorama of scenes clustered themselves in my mind. They swam in my head then drifted away like a phantom, strange and silent.

And then I had that strange feeling again. Boiling blood simmered through my veins. Fires seeped through my eyes. I called out into the hall, "I am insane! Look at me! I am crazy!" One of the guards came forward and told me to keep quiet. I heard him say to another man, "He's losing nerves. Better bring him a drink." And they brought a bottle of strong wine and put it on the table. I was told to take it when I felt like it.

Mary, then that feeling went away. I was normal again. Not long after that I received your telegram. I read and reread it over and over. I devoured every word that was in it. I felt low because I had caused you so much trouble. When they handed me the telegram, my hand shook that for a few moments I could not make my hands steady to open your letter. But finally I got the telegram opened.

Mary, you know that telegram gave me courage. I will die like a man. I have killed a person therefore I will pay with my life. Oh, Mary, I really am insane. But they would not believe me. That was the tragic part of the whole thing. I would be sent to an institution if they knew I was not normal. But fate changed the course and put me into the electric chair. I was not afraid anymore. I had courage and I will not flinch.

I took a sip of wine and felt warmth coming over me.

On the following pages I will list the following:

1. The names of the individuals who have been involved

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Not long after this a priest ~~came~~ <sup>came</sup> in. He was holding a bible on his hand. I had an hour left before they were to lead me to the chair. I told the priest that I wanted to be alone and he went away. I smoke one cigarette. Then two. Then another.

And the saying of Granny came to my mind, "Don't ever get married." But it was too late to think about that now. Too late. The minutes ticked by.

Soon the priest came back. And there was a man with him. I remember there were tears in my ~~eyes~~ <sup>eyes</sup>. And I could not see clearly. I controlled myself the best that I could. The noise of the shoes thundered and echoed through the empty corridors. And then we stopped. My ears were deaf to all noises. My eyes were opened, but I did not see anything. I felt as though I had no eyes at all.

Then a piece of cloth was placed around my eyes. I was led to a corner and they put me down into a place where I sat. I heard the priest softly praying. And then all was quiet. Very quiet, so quiet that I heard my heart pounding within me. Then electric entered me and I was instantly killed.

No pain, no suffering. I died just like that.

I soared away ~~into the heavens~~. I thought of you, Mary, all the time. I could not let you out of my mind. My childhood days and scenes drifted into my imagination. I saw Granny dying at the bedside. I saw you as I knew you long ago. I remember those blonde curls. And that rosy complexion.

I love you, Mary. I still do.

I want you to remember that always. But I guess I don't deserve your love any longer. You should really hate me.



So you see, I am a scoundrel. Like my grandfather. Like my father. They all did what I had done. They got married and tragedy lurked in each one of the marriage. Grandfather died a tragic death. And father too. Mother died amidst sad surroundings. I guess that the saying "like father like son" still holds its meaning in our family.

Oh, Mary, how can I ever forgive myself for causing you all this trouble? I guess I shall always be a scoundrel in your eyes. I only hope that Bobby and the little baby could never marry when they grow up. I hope that they would not cause unhappiness in the families of other people. Mary, I wish that you will explain to them what is the matter with them when they grow older.

Save them from suffering what I did. You would be doing me a great big favor. No one could ever understand what I had suffered. Not even you. Only myself could ever know the real agony of the sufferings of epilepsy. It is hell. It is torture. It is better to be dead and I ~~mean~~ really mean it too.

Oh, Mary, my darling. What had you ever done to deserve such sufferings? I knew that if you were not with child then you would be at my side and helping me in my last moments. You would do your best to help me get out of the <sup>mess</sup> jam. I am safe. Even though you could not do very much you would have done your best. But it would not have done any good at all. But at least you would have tried your best. If I had not done what I did, I would be at your side and easing you. And I truly mean it too.

I love you Mary. Please remember it.

Remember that I love you always.



Yes, I want you to remember that always and I do not mean it vaguely. I really mean it. I want you to always love me with ~~my~~ <sup>your</sup> heart.

Mary, forgive me! Mary, forgive me!

In a little hospital room where the walls were white and silent, there was a woman sleeping in the bed. She was softly crying and there was the wailing of a baby near the bed on her side. It was a little baby boy and he was strong and lusty. He was crying loudly.

The mother was resting peacefully. Near her there was a little boy. He was sitting near her and consoling her. He was admiring his baby brother. The mother was softly stroking his hair. There were tears in her eyes. She was crying and trying to hold her tears back.

Suddenly the boy asked her, "Where is father? Mother, where is Daddy?"

She answered very quietly, "Daddy is far away. Far, far away."

She turned her head and she softly murmured to herself, "Listen, Fred. They would never know. They would never know."

Then she slowly wiped her eyes but the tears kept coming and continued dropping, dropping, slowly, slowly.....



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